

February 19, 2019

Esteemed members of Education Committee,

I am deeply troubled by the recent introduction of three dangerous bills focused on forced regionalization (SB-738, SB-457 and SB-874). Forced regionalization, of any size, is literally the death knell of this great state and attempts to thwart local control under the guise of fiscal responsibility. Connecticut's strength is its bedroom communities and our outstanding schools. Any erosion to the quality of education and your base of successful taxpayers will walk. The state really does not have vibrant cities and a growing economy that will attract professionals if we harm our performing school districts. This transcends party line – and these bills are the most catastrophic legislation to Connecticut's future. Forcing schools to regionalize would deprive parents and boards of education of that decision-making authority, and that is unacceptable.

The claims of unequal education are also patently false. We already spend more per student in our cities than the suburbs. The quality of schools is predicated on the value placed on education at home. Not dollars spent or forced regionalization. Regionalization will not save money. The cost of combining resources, retrofitting schools, and leveling up salaries, and sorting through legal obligations will offset any savings. A 2011 study by the National Education Policy Center found the savings from school consolidation are “vastly overestimated.” Larger school districts end up hiring more administrators, not fewer.

We chose Wilton predominantly for our young kids, given its great schools and friendly neighborhoods. I have often told my wife that moving to Wilton is the single best decision we have made in our life. Our son is speech delayed, and the quality of care we have received from the teachers, speech pathologists and our schools is inimitable. Brady has thrived because our educators don't punch the clock and many of whom live, work and have strong ties to our community. If either of the forced regionalization bills gets passed, I can promise you two things: I will NEVER vote Democrat again in my life; and my family will quickly sell our Wilton house at a loss and move to New Jersey, New York, or even Pennsylvania. YOU will have driven another successful, taxpaying family from Connecticut. We love Wilton and Connecticut, please don't make us move away! We are not alone either – passing these bills will result in a tidal wave of wealth and middle class residents moving out of Connecticut. Realtors are already seeing the impact of this damaging legislation – families are reconsidering moving to Connecticut. I'm sure you are well aware that new residents to Connecticut earned only 55 percent of their departing counterparts' salaries on average. That will not help our profound budgetary and economic issues.

I implore you to oppose ANY forced regionalization bills. We will also not settle for a study on the topic – that will drag on for years and the prospect of regionalization would make CT towns less appealing. Please do not forcibly take away any town's ability to control their own children's educations. High quality education for our students is our first and most fundamental priority. I do not understand why Connecticut is intentionally sabotaging their best assets – our schools!

Respectfully,

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