

## *Opposition to SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874*

*I am part of the nearly unanimous opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 among Connecticut's public school parents. They don't improve our kids' education or save taxpayers any money. They harm our communities and particularly hurt disadvantaged students. They undermine the voices of parents and teachers within our local schools.*

### **Academic Achievement:**

The best overall academic achievements are in elementary schools with fewer than 500 students and high schools with fewer than 1,000. Regionalized schools have longer commutes. They have less parent volunteering and extracurricular participation. They have more truancy and dropouts.

### **Cost:**

The most cost-effective districts have fewer than 5,000 students. Many of Connecticut's large districts such as Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford have high costs while many of our small districts have average or low costs. Trivial cost reductions from regionalization come from savings in the smallest districts. However, that represents such a small fraction of the state's education spending that the benefits are offset by implementation costs.

### **Community:**

These bills erode communities and towns! They will damage property values. That, in turn, harms our tax bases. They make it harder to attract new taxpayers and businesses, which affects **state revenues**.

The lack of clarity in these bills is already creating market confusion that discourages new families from moving to Connecticut and encourages existing families to leave. The specter of uncertainty hanging over Connecticut damages home values while these bills are considered and, subsequently, would continue their damage while families await the judgement of a government commission. The commission would operate with a rushed timeline and inadequate participation from the regions with the best schools.

### **Students:**

At-risk students do better in smaller school districts. The optimal school size for disadvantaged students is elementary schools up to 300 students and high schools up to 600. Regionalization risks throwing them into environments where they are less likely to thrive. These are the students most likely to miss class and ultimately drop out of larger districts. Larger districts are less connected with their local communities. Teachers are less involved. It is that teacher involvement that can make the difference between success and failure for disadvantaged students.

Our state lawmakers should be focused on bringing up the lower performing districts rather than destroying the ones that already perform at exceptional levels with little or no state financial aid.

#### Data and Case Studies:

All the research has already been done and therefore, no study is needed!

Regionalization does not work – it failed in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont and it would fail in Connecticut. Regionalization's high failure rate has been well documented in *Improving Educational Opportunity and Equity through School District Consolidation in Maine*, *A Cost-Benefit Analysis of School Regionalization in Massachusetts*, and *Vermont School District Consolidation Case Study*. All of the above facts are available in *K-12 Regionalization in Connecticut: Pros, Cons and Surprises*. Unambiguously rejecting these bills would save Connecticut from a fiscal, educational, and economic mistake that others have made but we can still avoid.

Our schools are one of the best resources our small state enjoys! I hope you will oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

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