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## TESTIMONY OF HOUSTON PUTNAM LOWRY IN OPPOSITION TO RSB: 874 – AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT

This testimony is submitted in opposition to RSB: 874 – An Act Concerning The Creation Of Regional School Districts. I have submitted testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly regularly since the mid-1980s. While I have been an elected member of the Avon Board of Education for more than a decade, I am speaking in my personal capacity.

There is an unspoken assumption large school districts are more “efficient” than smaller school districts. That assumption is simply wrong. Each school district is run by the local Board of Education as their local constituents require with the assistance of a local superintendent. Section 5 (lines 274-287) of this bill removes the salary of a superintendent from the Educational Cost Sharing Formula if:

1. The school district has a population of less than 10,000 (Avon has a population of 18,352, so it would not be affected by this proviso).
2. Has one or two elementary schools located in the district (Avon has only two elementary schools, so Avon would be affected by this proviso).
3. Has fewer that 2,000 resident students (Avon has more than 3,000 students, so it would not be affected by this proviso).

The “full in” cost for a superintendent is roughly \$175,000/year to \$275,000/year (depending on fringe benefits and the like). In the context of a school budget, this is peanuts.

The Town of Avon provides an excellent education to its residents (and nearly 4% of CHOICE students enrolled in our school system). Avon spent an average of \$17,184.00 per student in 2018.<sup>1</sup>

The cities of Hartford and New Haven spent \$19,616 and \$18,381 per student in 2018 respectively and I think Avon gets better results (however you define results). Avon spends less than half the \$35,155 per student that Cornwall spends and I still think Avon gets better results than Cornwall. That is due to the hard work of our local superintendent, the Avon Board of Education, our teachers, our students and our parents. Having a local superintendent is very important for Avon.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/spending/per-student>

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There is no doubt Avon is a smaller school district. I would hate to dilute our academic excellence by unnecessarily forcing us to merge with other school districts by removing the salary of a superintendent from the Educational Cost Sharing Formula. Local control of public education is a 350 year old tradition in Connecticut. That tradition should not be changed, unless it is done at a local level. A local superintendent is a necessary part of using that local control wisely.

I request the Education Committee **NOT** report this bill to the General Assembly without removing lines 274-287.