

Testimony – SB 457; SB 738; SB 874 -- Friday, March, 1, 2019

Bryan D. Luizzi, Ed. D.

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874. Quite frankly, taken at face value, these three bills threaten to dismantle our state's educational system and to put in its place an inferior structure based on forced regionalization through legislative mandate. Sustainability has always been a significant priority for our schools, and school districts across Connecticut have taken great strides in controlling costs and sharing services wherever possible and appropriate. However, on behalf of our children and our schools, efficiency must be coupled with quality. Indeed, while efficiency is important, effectiveness is paramount, and education is more than an expense, as these bills appear to assume. Providing a quality education to all children is a moral imperative for our society, as well as an investment in our future.

A foundational value of Connecticut's educational system is a belief in the benefits of local control of the public schools. Each school system is governed by a Board of Education representing and accountable to its community. For over 70 years, Boards of Education across Connecticut have been empowered to establish regional school districts when it was best for those specific towns, and since then 17 regional school districts, serving approximately 24,000 students, have been created. There is also already in place incentives for regionalization, which some communities have taken advantage of if appropriate for them. As stewards of their systems, Boards of Education across the state review their unique situations, evaluate positive and negative outcomes of regionalization, and make informed decisions based upon the best interests of their stakeholders: students, parents, staff, and community. By mandating regionalization and in many cases forcing districts to act against their own best interests, these bills take a "one size fits all" approach to our highest responsibility. Education is complex, challenging, dynamic, and nuanced, and only through local control can Connecticut continue to be a national leader in educational quality and outcomes.

Let's not dismantle what is working by emulating unsuccessful models from other states, under the false banner of "efficiency." Instead, let's get behind Connecticut as a national leader in education by investing in our schools, learning from each other's success, and focusing our efforts on high-impact solutions. Education is not an expense to be managed, but an investment to be nurtured. I am writing to respectfully ask you to please continue investing in Connecticut's highly successful educational system, and to work collaboratively with all stakeholders on the path of continuous improvement for our schools. Thank you again for the opportunity to share this testimony with you, and thank you for your commitment to the citizens of Connecticut and the over 500,000 children in our public schools.

Respectfully,

Bryan D. Luizzi, Ed. D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
New Canaan Public Schools