

2/28/19

SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874

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. These proposed bills are troubling to me and I'd like to tell you a couple of the many reasons why I am opposed to them.

First of all, my town of Harwinton is already in an existing regional school district. Our town along with Burlington, currently make up Region 10. We are a very high performing, successful regional school district. By breaking up our long-established school district, you will also be destroying the community around it. Harwinton & Burlington are neighboring towns & we are a close-knit community that successfully work together.

SB 738 proposes the alignment of the school districts with the Probate Court Districts map, which would result in the removal of Harwinton from Region 10 & would be replaced with Farmington. Harwinton would then be placed in the newly created Region 24 school district, which is made up of the farthest points in the Northwest Corner of the state. I have many concerns about this. One is the location of the schools, which will result in extended lengths of time travelling on the bus for our Harwinton students. How safe will this be for our children to potentially be on a 50 mile or more bus ride to school? How long will they have to be on the bus versus how long they'll be in the classroom? The extra hours spent going to & from school will most definitely take away from their learning time. I'm also concerned about the large physical size of the new region 24 that Harwinton would be placed into. How would the weather & school cancellations be taken into consideration? Harwinton is so far away from the other towns, that the weather could vary. For example, it could be clear in Harwinton one morning, while at the same time, there could be an ice storm in Lakeville or North Canaan, or vice-versa. How would this work? Would the Harwinton students get penalized by the upper Northwest Corner's harsh weather by having to stay home on, say, Lakeville's snow days, when it's sunny in Harwinton? Or when it's clear in the far corner but icy or snowy in Harwinton, will our children's safety will be at risk, as the buses try to transport them through our wintry weather, in order to get them to the clear town 50 miles away? How many unnecessary snow days will Harwinton students have to endure, while they could've been at school? Will they have to go to school through July or longer? I don't see a logical solution to this with the great geographical distances between Harwinton & the rest of the far Northwest Corner. I think our children's well being & safety should be our top priority. But by removing Harwinton from Region 10, you will be risking our children's safety, as well as short changing their education.

I urge you to, please not pass proposed Senate Bills 457, 738 & 874.

Thank you again for hearing my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Steven Misluk

Harwinton, CT