

Attached and below is written testimony opposing bills SB 738/457/874. I am writing in response to the proposed bills SB 738/457/874, which will force regionalization of CT public schools. I STRONGLY opposed to these bill. I recently discovered that Democrats of the education committee, voted to send these bills for public hearings. I am deeply disappointed with this outcome as a fellow Democrat as I believe this is not in the best interest for Connecticut.

I am a Wilton resident. I used to live in Norwalk and the reason I relocated was for the incredible education system Wilton has to offer. I knew that my decision to move to Wilton would mean higher costs for taxes and to purchase a home but I decided it was worth it for the education my children would receive. Wilton Schools have consistently ranked in the top echelon in the state and even all of the US. I know my children are receiving a great education and colleges across the country take notice of this. Our school, as well as many others in Fairfield county, is one of the primary reasons people choose to relocate to CT vs. New York and NJ, even if that meant adding time and expense to their work commutes. My husband works in New York City and while moving to Wilton added on another hour to his daily commute as well as additional cost, we still felt it was the right decision for our children due to the incredible quality of Wilton's public schools. This is a common reason I hear frequently from people that have move to Wilton and neighboring towns from all over the country. They don't move here due to lower taxes, property costs, job availability or desirability but Education.

CT is not the desired state that it use to be – we are not ranked anywhere near the top for places to work, live in retirement or quality of life. Unfortunately we are ranked 3rd among states that people are leaving. A key reason people remain in Connecticut is the educational edge we have over our fellow Northeast States. Regionalization will eliminate one of the few remaining benefits our state has to offer.

Regionalization will NOT save money. Cost of combining resources, retrofitting schools, leveling salaries, and sorting through legal obligations will offset any saving. A 2011 study found benefits of consolidation is vastly overestimated. Larger school districts ultimately hire more administrators, not fewer. UConn found in 2010 that there is no link between efficiency and academic performance.

Regionalization WILL eliminate Local control. It will change the character of towns. I know my children's teachers, my Board of Education – this is what makes our school special. Our school district attracts the best teachers and administrators who value a small district and personal connections as much as I do. Regionalization WILL harm school quality, our property values and our state.

As a democrat, I have no issue with voting for a republican candidate in the next election that will help our state grow and improve. As a wife of a husband who works in the New York City, I have no problem moving to another state if it benefits my children in their education. If these bills grow closer to passing, my family and I will, sooner than later, move to avoid the negative impact we will incur on our property value.

This is a one-issue subject for all of us, and, from what I hear from various social circles, Wilton is largely united and are spreading our voices as I have never seen before. We know that all our neighboring towns have come out against this. The question I have for you is simple - are you going to listen to the people that you represent? Please oppose SB 738 and 457 and 874.

Respectfully,
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