

February 28, 2019

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.

We are reaching out in hopes you send a clear message in support of the state's children by swiftly and clearly eliminating the potential for Connecticut mandating regional school districts and central office consolidation. We ask that you oppose SB 874, SB 738 and SB 431 publicly and immediately.

Five years ago, we decided to move to Connecticut from Ohio for the schools. We spent a great deal of time researching school districts and settled in Wilton. Our schools aren't without room for improvement, but are excellent none-the-less. By proposing a regional district you remove the essence of what makes the schools so fantastic in my view. It was with clear intention that we opted to bring our four children, whom we plan to educate K-12 in public schools, to a small district with a small-town feel and bucolic setting. We looked at multiple towns, but part of our reason for settling in Wilton was its small population. We made a purposeful decision that we did not want to be in a city, just as many opt for larger towns or cities rather than a town as small as Wilton. Requiring regional schools would change the very culture of Wilton and the reason so many opt to live here. In essence, you'd eliminate small-town living for those with children in public schools. In truth, a regional school would no longer make CT an appealing place for us to live and raise our children.

Beyond our personal preferences, all recent research clearly indicates that Wilton is too large to realize cost-saving benefits from regionalizing the school district. There may be specific areas where districts could voluntarily pool resources for increased achievement at lower cost, but research has born out that this isn't the case on the district level. Syracuse University researchers found that the optimal district size was between 1,000-3,500 students. School consolidation would take districts, including Wilton, out of this optimal size. Further, this bill does not focus on those most impacted by the decision -- Connecticut's students. We find it abhorrent that any education bill under review by the elected officials in Connecticut is not drafted and voted on with the best interest of our students in mind, but rather solely about financial savings (savings we don't believe will bear out). These proposals would hurt education around Connecticut, the largest draw for potential residents.

We look forward to any discussions of state mandated school regionalism being promptly stricken down and educational decisions maintained at the local level. Thank you again for hearing our testimony on this. We are happy to discuss or answer any of your questions.

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