

## **Testimony in Opposition to bills SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874**

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the above mentioned bills, or any other legislation that forces, implicitly or explicitly, the regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

While there may be opportunities to realize synergistic cost savings through the voluntary sharing of other municipal services, such as transfer stations, public safety, and town administration, forced regionalization of schools is not going to be helpful to anyone and would face very strong macroeconomic headwinds.

In my town, Wilton, a survey among 1,411 taxpayers was just conducted and among its findings are the following:

- 81% of taxpayers say "quality of schools" was a reason they moved to Wilton (94% among families with kids in Wilton Public Schools)
- 54% said it was the primary reason for moving to Wilton (68% among 25-49 year olds, 70% among families with kids in Wilton Public Schools, and 74% among families with kids pre-K or younger)

You can see the full results of the survey here: <http://www.wiltonct.org/documents/SummaryofSurveyresults.pdf> (including strong support for exploring the sharing of certain town services).

Like many other small towns throughout the state, a high quality school system is the single most important and thus valuable benefit the town has to offer its residents. Take that away, and you take away a town's ability to compete for residents. And in a state with a flat to declining population, that would lead to a downward spiral towards disaster for towns like Wilton.

I'm sure you understand that those residents typically paying the highest taxes are the same people most able to, and thus most likely to move out of state when the costs are just too high (as many well-off retirees are already doing). Further, you must also realize that these bills would certainly have negative impact on property values in towns like Wilton with reductions in assessed values following forcing a dramatic rise in the mill rate, further eroding the competitiveness of towns like Wilton. At some point, Westchester County is going to look like a much better option than the towns of Fairfield County. Especially for young families.

We must find ways to encourage people to come to Connecticut and populate both our cities and our small towns if we are to remain viable. I say this both as a business owner in Norwalk where I employ about 50 people, and a long-time resident of the state.

Bills such as these do the opposite; instituting disincentives and punitive measures for exactly those people that may be the most important to the state's tax rolls.

I hope you will oppose all three of these bills and any other effort to force consolidation of Connecticut public schools. It just doesn't make economic sense.

Thank you,  
David

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