

Testimony regarding 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. As a parent of public school students, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

I very much appreciate that the State of Connecticut needs to improve its revenue and spending situation in order to have a healthier fiscal situation for generations to come. However, I believe that the proposed bills will make our lovely state's fiscal situation much worse for the reasons below:

1. Our schools are some of the best ones in the nation. Families like mine move to towns in Connecticut mostly because of the school systems. I believe the proposed bills will result in lower quality education. If we let the quality of the school systems deteriorate, families will likely leave, or at a minimum, not move to Connecticut. Speaking for my own family, if New Canaan's school system is forced to change, my family will seriously consider moving to Westchester County or back to New York City.
2. We cannot simply talk about just the school system without talking about our communities. Our communities revolve around our schools. The proposed bills are not solely about our education system. They are about our communities. Please do not consider these proposed bills without their impact on our communities. The proposed changes have the potential to rip apart communities by impacting families' lives outside of the classroom (e.g., sports, extracurricular activities, after-school activities, etc.). I encourage you to consider those impacts, which have significant monetary and non-monetary costs, that should be incorporated into your analysis. Please do not proceed without this appropriate analysis.
3. My son gets picked up at 6:35 am for a 45-minute bus ride. I have been commuting to New York City for many years and know the impact of lack of sleep well. I have made so many mistakes after days of insufficient sleep. You must have first-hand experiences yourselves. Our children do not get enough sleep as it is. The proposed changes will make this situation a lot worse. How do you quantify the cost of lack of sleep and its impact on our young children's development? I have read many academic articles (both medicine and psychology). There is uniform belief that sufficient sleep is extremely important. Proposed changes will result in less sleep for our children. This will result in poor learning and adverse social consequences. It is impossible to quantify these in U.S. dollars, but I encourage you to take this into consideration.
4. I heard about research (e.g., Hartford Foundation for Public Giving) that questions whether regionalization actually provides economics of scale. For example, Rodriguez Data Solutions suggests longer transportation times will result in higher costs. I would encourage you to complete unbiased and thorough analysis for these.
5. Certain areas in our state do indeed benefit from smaller school systems as a result of closer attention to students who need the attention and help the most.
6. There are a lot of towns in Westchester County and State of New Jersey that have very small towns and very small school districts. Have they seriously considered bills like this? Aren't we at risk of losing families to those areas if we are the only ones making changes like this? I certainly believe we are at risk.
7. Rather than tearing apart the very fabric of our communities by changing school systems, why don't we focus on other areas to generate economics of scale and lowering our expenses in ways that do not affect our communities? For example, why not start with combining police forces or fire stations or libraries? Those are certain to provide savings. Combining school districts might look like it is saving us money, but in reality, they will likely be prohibitively expensive due to many the unintended costs that we will incur (e.g., less people wanting to live in Connecticut, longer commutes, lower quality schools, empty and decrepit school buildings, etc.).

I came to this country for the first time in 1992. I was very lucky to have arrived in this beautiful State of Connecticut back then. I am still here now and I am hoping to live here for as long as I can. I am not

happy about our state's finances, but I strongly believe these proposed bills will make our towns less attractive for families, and therefore, our finances will get worse. I would encourage you not to do anything that might affect our state's high quality population, talent and resources in a negative way. I believe the proposed bills will affect them in a negative manner. In fact, if one or more of these bills passes and our town's school system is impacted, my family will strongly consider moving somewhere else. If enough families think like we do, we will have fewer children in our school systems, and therefore, lower education expenses, but that is certainly not we want for our state.

Thank you again for reading my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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