

## **Please Oppose S.B. 457, 738, and 874**

Chairmen McCorry and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarthy, and other distinguished members of the education committee: My name is Samuel Shukovsky and I am from Connecticut. I am opposed to bills 457, 738, 874 and any other forms of these bills.

When I moved to Connecticut 9 years ago due a job I took in the state, I had a choice. I could move to CT or NY as the position is right on the state border. We chose CT because of the superiority of the schools and the towns associated with them. Now we have these three bills that threaten to take the quality schools away through consolidation, what incentive do those of us who live near the border have to stay in Connecticut?

West Virginia consolidated their schools in the 1990s. No money was saved. The quality of education dropped, the number of administrators increased, and busing times escalated, up to two hours a day for some students. Advanced Placement courses were dropped, and of those that were still offered, the percentage passing dropped below 50 percent. Connecticut is aiming to set up the same situation. Further, an article in Education Finance and Policy suggested that district consolidation may actually create negative impacts such as higher transportation costs, a "leveling up" of salaries, and more negative attitudes among staff members and parents. The same study suggests that financial benefits may be found only when consolidation of very small districts of fewer than 1000 students occurs.

Arguments for consolidation, which merges schools or districts and centralizes their management, rest primarily on the presumed benefits of fiscal efficiency. But there are many challenges and threats to the quality of education offered when consolidation occurs due to considerable differences in history, geography, population density, and politics between towns according to the National Education Policy Center. Because economic crises often provoke calls for consolidation as a means of increasing government efficiency, the current interest in consolidation is not surprising. However, experience with other areas that have regionalized shows they are unlikely to be a reliable way to obtain substantive fiscal or educational improvement according to the NEPC.

I hope you will oppose 457, 738, 874, and all of forms of these bills which all will lead to forced consolidation of Connecticut public schools that will benefit no one's education and save no money.