

Tom & Shannon Skypek
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Dear Education Committee,

Tom and I are writing to express our strong opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and to any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

Tom and I both grew up in small Connecticut towns. After graduating high school, we moved to Northern Virginia to pursue higher education and economic opportunities, but we always felt the pull to move back home and raise our children among family and within the much lauded educational system. In 2013 we had an opportunity to effectuate that move and were excited to do so.

Since moving back and sending our oldest into the school system, we had a change of heart and decided instead to homeschool them, allowing us to teach them following a classical model of education which we believe is the best approach. Until now, we have been able to do this with relative freedom, which is why I was extremely dismayed to see section 17 of SB 874 and its rollback of parental rights in reference to homeschooling. Requiring parents or guardians of homeschooled students to register in person is an unnecessary waste of time.

An email sent to a fellow homeschooler by Rep. Liz Linehan indicates these registration rolls will be shared with the Department of Children and Families to ensure homeschoolers do not have active investigations on file. Why? Of course there are men and women using the guise of homeschooling as an excuse for abuse, but requiring all families to be checked against a master list of open cases at DCF does nothing to discover those families - *if families withdrawing to homeschool come up on a list of active DCF cases, it is because the state already knows them to be abusive and should already be providing support and oversight*. DCF needs to spend more time providing proper support for the children currently under their purview so more children like Londyn Sack and Matthew Tirado will not suffer and die. They do not need to spend time tracking down homeschoolers who have done nothing wrong.

As a tax-paying resident of Somers, I am further dismayed by the totality of the bill. Coercing smaller school districts to regionalize by withholding state funds is absolutely inappropriate. Different towns have different needs, and those needs are best met when decision making powers are kept as close to the local school district as possible. Studies conducted regarding regionalization have not shown a clear reduction in educational spending, or in better outcomes for students.

Since leaving the public school system, we have discussed moving to another state with lower taxes many times. We have thus far stayed because of local family and the absolute freedom Connecticut maintains for homeschooling families. I am afraid the passage of SB 874 will lead

to the loss of that freedom. In addition, regionalization will lead to decreased property values. With property sales down in Connecticut, we are concerned that if we wait too long to move, we will not see a return on our biggest investment - our home. The passage of SB 874 will likely be the final straw toward moving away from Connecticut.

Please oppose the forced regionalization proposed in SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any legislation rolling back the freedoms of homeschoolers such as that proposed in section 17 or SB 874.

Thank you,
Tom & Shannon Skypek