

February 28, 2019

Re: Opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874

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As a parent of two New Canaan 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. My wife and I have been residents of New Canaan for twenty years and can say unequivocally that the reason we chose to move here and the reason we chose to *stay here* after experiencing a life changing event was the quality and effectiveness of our schools and the programs they offer.

We view ourselves as extremely fortunate to have made this decision as we had no idea at the time just how important the breath and quality of the educational experience would become for our two children – each for their own, very different reasons.

Our oldest child is extremely bright in a traditional way and while we understood his abilities, we had no idea just that there are options that allow him to explore learning in an accelerated and non-traditional manner. His enrolment in Saxe Middle School's "Gifted Program" has allowed him to explore the development and history of some of the world's great civilizations as well as the detailed history of our own Country. This has been an enormous asset to him as he has progressed because not only is he able to recite that facts of what happened, he is able to process WHY the history developed and what those developments meant to society at large.

Our second child through the system is equally bright but, because of a learning disorder, has an extraordinarily difficult time communicating what he knows/understands. It is because of this verbal hesitation he started to become bullied. When he was challenged by other children and could not defend himself verbally, he reacted in a physical manner, something that got him labeled as "troubled" and crushed his confidence as student and as a person. This all but devastated his learning environment. He struggled through three grades to keep up until one of his teachers (one the kindest, most caring people you would ever meet) at South School recognized what was happening, pulled him aside and decided to have him tested. What we found was that while he knows the answers, he struggles express them both verbally and in writing. He now has a full team that assists him in processing his work, in dealing with his issues, and that ensures he is a HAPPY, bright kid who enjoys school.

Today, both of our kids are excelling in their course work and thriving in their respective environments. Our oldest is a varsity athlete whose ACT scores, GPA, and course structure will allow him the opportunity to apply to some of the top colleges in the world. Our youngest has regained his confidence, feels good about himself, maintains an A average and is someone who has adopted the role of a leader in helping kids with similar disabilities. He is also a select athlete – having played for elite teams country wide and assuming an infectious leadership attitude.

While some of the above is admittedly the musings of a proud father, I am quite certain that both of our kids would not have had the opportunity to grow, learn and excel as they have had it not been for the New Canaan Public School System. I am also convinced that a forced regionalization would lead to the erosion of quality and character that has afforded my children this opportunity to succeed. Further, it is obvious that the catastrophic effects of larger school sizes, decreased administration and elimination of the programs I have spoken of would have decimated one of my children's ability to learn, while surely throttling the other.

My wife and I are not rich. In fact, we have sacrificed much to live where we do and to provide our children the opportunity to prosper in an environment like the New Canaan Public School System. We also do not dispute that there are educational disparities that exist both State and Country wide. We are, however, absolutely convinced that forced regionalization – or forced anything for that matter is NOT the answer. We hope you will oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874 and any other legislation that opens the door to the forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Thank you for listening, your time, and your representation.

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