

February 28, 2019

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing in opposition to SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any others that open the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

I have lived in Norwalk and Wilton, Connecticut for a combined 14 years. I am currently a Wilton resident with 3 school-aged children in Wilton Public Schools. There are very few amenities, but we chose to live in Wilton solely based on the quality of the schools and have not regretted that decision. Families, including mine, work hard and sacrifice to live in Wilton, in addition to many other Connecticut towns. Several have 2 working parents and travel hours to and from work daily, for the sole purpose of providing quality education for our children. Being in an environment that fosters smaller class sizes where teachers and administrators connect with their students was a requirement in choosing a school system.

Regionalization does not improve children's education. Research consistently demonstrates that students perform better and feel more acclimated in smaller-sized districts. (Education Finance and Policy, vol 2, issue 4, 341-375) **By forcing towns to consolidate, it will negatively affect quality of schools and take away parents' rights to determine what happens to their children. At-risk students are hurt the most. These students do better in smaller school districts.** Regionalized schools have longer commutes, less parent volunteering and extracurricular participation. They have more truancy and dropouts. Larger districts are less connected with their local communities. Teachers are less involved. It is teacher involvement that can make the difference between success and failure for disadvantaged students.

The Bills' purpose is to "create a more efficient educational system". Multiple studies have shown consolidation does not lead to efficiencies or cost savings. A 2011 National Education Policy Center study claims that benefits from school district consolidation are "vastly overestimated". If regionalization were to occur, the first consideration must be education, not education cost. Rather than towns running school as it's residents see fit, this is truly Hartford telling towns how to run its schools. These Bills will not work due to the bureaucracy it would create, the student achievement outcomes it would hurt, and the cost savings that won't be realized. There is very little benefit, yet great harm imposed on the lives of my children and those of my neighbors both in town and all across Connecticut.

To alter their education during formative years with little to no benefit to the state would be devastating. The future of the state will one day be in our children's hands. The new administration stated it was going to implement ways to attract and keep residents in Connecticut. I can assure you these Bills will produce the opposite. Please consider the future of the children and the future of the state of Connecticut. I respectfully and strongly urge you to oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 847 and any other

legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Sincerely,

Christine R. Silva
58 McFadden Drive
Wilton, CT 06897
csilvas@optonline.net