

2/28/2019

Cochairmen Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez, distinguished ranking members Senator Berthel and Representative McCarty, and other distinguished members of the Education Committee:

I am writing you today, as a near 50 year resident of Connecticut, to oppose SB 457 and SB 738, and to oppose any wording in SB 874 that mentions forced regionalization of municipal school districts. I oppose any and all bills put forward that would result in forced school regionalization or any bill that aims to study forced regionalization or consolidation, or redistricting of school districts.

Why? Because regionalization is based on the false premise that it results in efficiencies and cost savings to the state. Every study done and every consolidation effort tried over the last century, excepting very small district outliers, have proven that regionalization of school districts leads to worse outcomes for students and also increases the cost of education. Additionally studies show breaking up cumbersome larger districts into smaller more manageable districts actually saves money and improves outcome. These regionalization bills will:

#1 be a waste of government time and money,

#2 not accomplish better educational outcomes for our children and will actually send them in the opposite direction,

#3 lead to a mass exodus of midlevel workers out of Connecticut, both families looking for better public school and working older persons and retirees who will see their housing values start to sink as school quality declines.

Over the last 20 years our town has weathered the tough times because we have a great midsized school district that provides quality for all children. New families still move here for the opportunity to join a school system that offers a highly individualized education, in a tight knit community, prepares students for an enriched civic life, maintains their physical health, and encourages freedom of expression and self actualization through an outstanding liberal education. I can't imagine a large school system being able to provide students with this type education, and study after study prove that it can't.

In fact midsized districts in Connecticut appear to be the nimble clipper ships of the current CT educational model, compared to the behemoth Titanic's of the larger districts. These midsized districts allows for quick adjustment to rapid changes in a seemingly faster and faster paced world of curriculum and technology changes, while still being able to provide service for all types of learners. Research already done in Connecticut and surrounding states proves that school district sizes on average of 2,500-3,000 students may be one of the best sizes to control cost and provide optimal outcomes. Some at risk population may actually benefit from much smaller school to achieve this, but on the whole the midsized school district is the best model. Studies in Massachusetts, Maine, and New York have shown that regionalization to larger districts actually increases cost and harms educational outcomes. It appears that large districts add to the cost of the bureaucracy of a regional school system as it grows. Layer upon layer of additional cost are required to provide nonessential activities unrelated to student and teacher

interaction, and require a leveling up of administration top-heavy salaries. Corruption of funds also appears to be a constant in large systems.

When my family moved to Connecticut in 1969 from the Midwest it was a state with real promise and opportunity; one with low taxes, good working people jobs, and good schools. Fast forward to 2000, as young adults out of school both my husband and I worked in NYC but decided to come back to Connecticut for a little more green space and the lower taxes. When we invested in a modest home here we began paying taxes that were about ½ of what we were paying in a NY suburb. Over the years, and more recently because of the changes in the Educational Cost Sharing Formula that favored the large cities over the surrounding suburbs, we have seen our CT taxes double and equal Westchester taxes. The taxes have been a small burden but one we share with the rest of Connecticut residents in order to see better outcomes for all our children in the state. Because most of us in the private sector do not have pensions we rely and look to our home values as a sort of financial hedge during medical and family emergencies in retirement. My fear is that once the state's school reputations is tarnished that we will lose people that need the investment they have made in their house to survive their retirement. They will move quickly out of our state. Do we really want to continue to lose private sector working adult empty nesters and retirees who are a source of income for the state and local property taxes? Why would we want to lose a segment of the states population that increases state and local municipalities coffers and is a segment that does not lead to large overburdened school districts? It is illogical.

In summary it appears that these bills are going in the opposite direction of scientific research which points toward mid-sized districts and local control of schools for optimal cost saving and student performance. Schools in mid-sized districts also stabilize housing value across the state. I would like to see a reworking of the large school districts into more mid-sized districts to improve their educational outcomes, improve and stabilize the housing market in all areas including cities. Large school districts lead to both poorer outcomes and cost too much money and they leave parents caught up in too much bureaucracy when they need to be communicating directly to essential staff and teachers. Lets give parents more local control. This is what the state should focus on. It is what is sorely needed for the students and families of Connecticut. They deserve no less.

Good Luck and Godspeed,

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