

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in opposition to all three bills: SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874, and any other bill that opens the door to forced or compelled regionalization, consolidation or redistricting of Connecticut schools.

To be clear, I am not opposed to school consolidation. In fact, I believe there is much the state can and should do to make it easier for the towns that wish to pursue consolidation in any form as a means of driving effective and efficient cost savings or improved student outcomes. I encourage this legislature to review and reconsider all existing laws that currently impede such efforts. Where there are true operating efficiencies to be found through regionalization, the towns should be allowed to do so voluntarily.

I oppose the aforementioned bills because I believe they are heavy-handed. They dramatically expand the role of state government in education and interfere with town governance. In many cases, towns have been efficiently managing their own budgets and schools by making tough decisions, exercising restraint, and looking at the long view. These bills run the risk of imposing policies that will disrupt local school district operations without regard to what is or is not working. A better approach would be to examine what ideas and methods are working on the local level and seek to replicate those in other school districts that need to be improved. (Please see attached study by Rodriguez Data Solutions for Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, June 2018)

The stated objective of this effort is said to be to create back office efficiencies in an effort to close the Connecticut state budget gap, but the language in the legislation calls for consolidating school districts and radically reorganizing the existing system in a way that would be disruptive without providing a realistic prospect of achieving substantial budget savings.

Therefore, I ask the esteemed members of this Committee to join me in opposing these and any other bills that open the door to forced or compelled regionalization, consolidation or redistricting of Connecticut schools.

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