

February 28, 2019

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

To Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874.

I believe that government and the services that it provides should be run in a cost effective and efficient manner. Connecticut spends a lot of money on education throughout the state, but I believe forced regionalization of our schools is not a viable strategy to manage the costs for one of the State's largest expenditures.

During this time of fiscal crisis in Connecticut, our leaders should be looking at a broad range of municipal services that should be considered for consolidation well before public education. This forced regionalization of schools does not improve education for our children nor does it save any money. The failure of these Bills to address the issue of education quality is an alarming omission.

Finding cost efficiencies in our school districts should be encouraged through carrots and not sticks. Local districts should be encouraged and rewarded for finding efficiencies with other districts for back office and administrative functions. This process should not be mandated by Hartford, but rather created locally where solving problems result in tailored, mutually beneficial cost savings that can be clearly identified.

Furthermore, it is disappointing to see punitive measures for noncooperation in the proposed Bills as well as hear this in the media by some leaders in Hartford. Our State's fiscal problems are too complicated and large for them not to be solved amicably and collaboratively.

Fundamentally, Connecticut has a revenue problem. We cannot achieve our current goals and meet our previous obligations with cuts alone. The leaders in Connecticut need to get our economy growing again. Poorly conceived Bills focused on the regionalization of schools are not the kind of legislation that attract families and the companies who employ them.

I ask that you oppose SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874 and any other legislation that forces regionalization of Connecticut public schools. Furthermore, I ask that you oppose any government commission to study regionalization of our schools as it will create uncertainty in our local school districts and communities scaring away families and businesses.

Thank you again for allowing me to submit testimony. I'm happy to answer any questions or discuss further.

Sincerely,

Christopher Steenbock
Wilton, CT