

**Town of Barkhamsted
Incorporated 1779**

**Don Stein
First Selectman, Town of Barkhamsted
Before the
Education Committee
March 1, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in opposition to **SB-874, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT.**

As proposed, the bill establishes a Commission on Shared School Services (COSSS) to “develop a plan for the redistricting or consolidation of school services and school districts”.

I am very concerned that before undertaking any review of educational costs, school district size, per pupil expenditures, geographic considerations, etc. the bill calls for a plan to redistrict or consolidate our schools. A commission is in no position to make recommendations regarding redistricting or consolidating schools.

Moreover, Section 5 of the bill penalizes towns and school districts that do not appoint a chief executive officer of the board to supervise schools or share superintendents. This proposal makes no sense and unfairly targets small school districts.

A one-size-fits all approach to school consolidation/regionalization is very misguided, particularly in light of the studies that have been done by towns exploring such options. For example, towns in Northwestern Connecticut were interested in determining whether regionalizing K-6 would prove beneficial, in terms of costs and educational quality.

As required, a study committee was formed with representatives from Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, and Norfolk to make recommendations regarding the addition of grades K-6 to the existing middle school and high school grades at Region 7. However, differences in the cost per student of each school would have increased the cost of K-6 education in Barkhamsted and New Hartford if K-6 was regionalized.

The study also compared Region 7 costs per student to Regions 6, 10 and 12, which suggested that regionalization by itself would not have a major impact on costs. In fact, in order to make the regionalization of K-6 budget neutral, the study found that they would somehow have to realize savings of \$2.8 million or 18%, which was not feasible.

The study also found that the towns had already realized many savings from shared services, such as cooperative purchasing, shared staff, and common curricula, so that consolidation wouldn't produce other significant opportunities for savings.

Participating in the study and gaining an understanding of the various factors that may affect opportunities for cost savings, such as existing building facilities and transportation needs, underscored for me how regionalization needs to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and not a top-down, mandated approach.

Please reject SB-874.

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