

Statement of Vicki A. Tesoro, First Selectman of Trumbull

Senate Bill 738- AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Senate Bill 457- AN ACT CONCERNING THE SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Senate Bill 874 - AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT

I want to thank our legislators for giving me and other citizens the opportunity to speak to you today on a subject that is important to me, public education. As a long time education advocate I firmly believe that every child in the State of Connecticut has the right to a quality, comprehensive public education so that they can reach their potential. That is good for the children, it is good for the parents and it is good for our State.

However, forced regionalization is not the means to achieve that end.

I have reviewed the proposed bills that are the subject of this hearing and, as First Selectman of Trumbull, I am troubled by the concept of “forced” regionalization contained in Bills 738 and 457. While the concept may have some benefit in the areas of purchasing and energy, it makes little sense to compel districts to give up their autonomy in the areas of education that impact instruction and curriculum.

In Trumbull, our school system is critical to our identity as a community. Our investment in education is one that our community embraces and the success of our students is a matter of civic pride. Our strong school system supports our property values and attracts new residents to our community, bringing to us a steady stream of new ideas and energy.

While our community has divergent points of view on some issues, we are united in our desire to preserve our right to create the school system that suits the needs of our community. The success of our school system speaks for itself. Please do not fix something that is not broken.

We believe the better course of action is encouraging communities to voluntarily join forces to control costs in non-instructional areas. There already exist regional schools in Connecticut and those were formed without forcing those communities to do so. I would suggest that any analysis of this issue should include a study of how and why these regional school districts were formed.

Another alternative put forward by the Governor in Bill 874 is incentivizing some communities to regionalize. But that decision must ultimately lie with that community.

This issue should be fully studied and vetted so everyone knows what regionalization means to their community including the financial, instructional, and decision making impacts.

We recognize that we need to find real solutions to the problems we face; however, this concept of forced regionalization is not the answer.

So, in conclusion, I once again thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today. Please, abandon any concept of forced regionalization. Let's proceed cautiously and with the idea of preserving home rule with respect to education. If we do, I am certain we can reach our goal of a quality, cost efficient education for all our children.