

February 27, 2019

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

My name is **Ana Torres-Ferreira** and I am a resident of Wilton, CT. My testimony below asks the Education Committee to vote "No" on **SB-874, SB-738 and SB-457**. I strongly urge you forcefully reject all three bills. Further, I ask the committee to refuse to move forward any new or revised bill that proposes formation of a commission to study possible regionalization or consolidation of public school districts.

Public education is the engine of the state's economy and Connecticut's greatest asset. Any of the three proposed bills would do immense damage by placing a dark cloud of lengthy uncertainty over public education and intrinsically-related property values until their earliest-possible effective date of July 1, 2021.

Connecticut's economy is in terrible shape. Our real estate markets are in a depression. Uncertainty created by the proposed study will dig our hole far deeper. Investment capital would avoid Connecticut. Any CEO, unable to assure employees that they could reside in towns with high-quality schools, will surely delay any decision to bring new jobs to Connecticut until the Spring of 2021 at the very earliest.

Approving any commission or study proposed in any of these bills will be the final nail in Connecticut's economic coffin. Any or all of these bills will greatly accelerate our state's decline, leaving Connecticut further and further behind the rest of the nation. None of the proposed bills focus on improving education outcomes. Rather, the outcome of either regionalization or consolidation will be reduced accountability and insertion of bureaucracy in the way of parents who need to advocate for their children. With traffic in many parts of the state paralyzed, requiring students to spend more time on buses will harm rather than improve educational outcomes.

Yet the leaders of a state in a desperate financial crisis propose to devote untold thousands of hours for highly-paid professionals to gather data, perform analyses and conduct meetings! If you want to help revive Connecticut's economy, please find ways to cut expenses rather than subvert our greatest asset.

I am writing this petition as part of the nearly unanimous opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 among Connecticut's public school parents. They don't improve our kids' education or save taxpayers any money. They harm our communities and particularly hurt disadvantaged students. They undermine the voices of parents and teachers within our local schools.

**SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 don't improve our children's education.**

The best overall academic achievements are in elementary schools with fewer than 500 students and high schools with fewer than 1,000. Regionalization leads to longer commutes, less parent volunteering, and less extracurricular participation. Regionalized schools have more truancy and more dropouts.

**SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 don't save taxpayers money.**

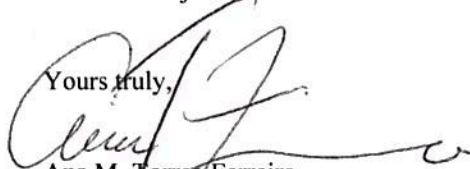
The most cost-effective districts have fewer than 5,000 students. Many of Connecticut's large districts such as Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford have above average costs, while many of our small districts have average or below average costs. Trivial cost reductions from regionalization would come from per-pupil savings in the smallest districts. However, that represents such a small fraction of the state's education spending that the benefits would be offset elsewhere.

**SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 hurt our communities...**

These bills damage property values in towns with regionalized schools. That, in turn, harms our tax bases. They would make it harder to attract new taxpayers and businesses.

As a parent who moved to Wilton specifically for their schools; As a Connecticut resident, who despite the incredible high cost of living, believes in the state and wants to continue to reside here, I ask that all forms of proposed bill's SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874 be rejected for the sake of our kids.

Yours truly,



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