

To whom it may concern,

I am the parent of two children, one attends the local public high school after having been homeschooled and the other continues to be homeschooled. My husband and I have chosen different educational paths for our children because they are different people with different interests and different learning styles. My job as a parent is to do what is best for my children and advocate on their behalf and therefore I strongly oppose SB 457, 738 and 874.

My children received a phenomenal education through the Integrated Day and H.O.T. School program at John Lyman Elementary School in Middlefield. When the forced transition to common core was implemented, its heavy focus on testing and relentless assessments threatened the integrity of a successful nontraditional program that produced creative, innovative thinkers. This led us to consider alternative educational options. We did a lot of research, spoke to many people and gathered loads of information, ultimately deciding that while we have no aversion to public school, the best way to meet the needs of our children and keep them engaged as learners, was to homeschool. Homeschooling allows parents to choose an individualized curriculum that compliments each child's particular learning style. There are many, many options and limitless resources. It is our right as parents to decide how to raise and educate our children. We know our children. We know their needs. We know their strengths. There is no reason or benefit to requiring homeschool parents to register with the same schools whose curriculum we felt did not meet the needs of our children. Please protect our rights and leave homeschooling out of the bill.

As a middle class resident in a small Connecticut town, I feel strongly that our interests are ignored and our voices diluted. Frustratingly, it continually costs more and more to live here while the state continues to make it less and less desirable to stay. We purposefully chose to live in a smaller town with a small school district. Small districts create a large sense of community where students are names, not numbers. The students in our area have different needs than the students in larger towns and cities. Local educators best know the needs of the students in our area and how to meet those needs. Durham is already part of a regional school district that combines similar towns and remains small. Large scale regionalization of school districts will virtually eliminate our small town voices and our students' best interests from the education process. It will create a bureaucratic, one-size fits all system that will result in a lower quality of education and less parental involvement. Common core, declining enrollment and a decreasing budget have already had detrimental effects to our school district. Please do not destroy it completely by eliminating local control. Regionalizing will only have negative effects- for the schools, for the children, for the towns and for the state of Connecticut.

Connecticut is dying. Politicians can continue to follow the path that leads to more residents and more jobs leaving the state or they can change paths and try to make Connecticut a state people want to raise their families in. Please make the right choice- protect our parents' rights to educate our children so we can continue to provide the best possible education for them and respect our small town voices and leave our school districts alone.

Sincerely, Karen Wheatley, Durham, CT