

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 am writing to express my strong opposition to Senator Looney & Senator Duff's proposed bills PSB 738, PSB 457 and PSB 874 which would force regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

As a child I had attended Stamford elementary schools, Ridgefield school junior and senior high schools then finally two years at a private school at Wooster School in Danbury known for diversity in the 70's and small class sizes.. I witnessed bussing in Stamford first hand which was very hard on the kids being bussed and created a junior high school environment which caused my family to move.

As a parent of recent graduates of Ridgefield schools, we started in the Norwalk school system, saw that one of my children needed more attention than a big school system like Norwalk could give to him. We moved to Ridgefield. I have witnessed first hand the benefits of locally run public schools. My children were educated in a nurturing environment where teacher engagement was high, individualized student learning was understood and acknowledged and high achievement was praised. Smaller class sizes very much made a difference.

Though I understand how economies of scale in administration may at first appear attractive from a fiscal standpoint, there is no guarantee this will help the bottom line. Larger schools and greater travel distances create apathy among parents being able to volunteer in the schools, fewer kids being able to participate in after school activities, loss of student and parental voices and would only succeed in eliminating local control and harming school quality.

This bill attacks our most precious asset as a community and as a state - the quality of our schools. We have some of the best schools in the country, do we really want to lower the positives of these schools. I do not see any articles praising the success of regionalization of school in other states. If approved, this bill would only further an additional outflow of residents, many of whom came to this state for the schools, further eroding state revenue and worsening the state's fiscal crisis.

Generalizations are an oversimplification of a complex problem. Regionalization does not always lead to reductions. Our worst performing districts have complicated problems that would not be addressed by dumbing down the better school. A one size fits all attitude does not work. Are there school districts supporting this measure?

For these reasons, I implore you for your support in opposing SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874 or any other efforts to force consolidation of Connecticut public schools.

Thank you again for hearing my testimony. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.
Krista Willett