

## Statement of the Town of Wilton Board of Finance

The Town of Wilton Board of Finance unanimously opposes SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874 and will join in town-wide and state-wide efforts to defeat these misguided and unhelpful bills.

Wilton has invested heavily in the local public school system which has consistently earned high performance ratings, and is among the top ten school districts in the state each year. These bills in question will undermine the local control that has made Wilton an educational success story in Connecticut. We do not believe it is worth taking the risk of harming Wilton's school performance for unknown, but likely modest, administrative consolidation cost savings. In summary, the bill is a very poor cost/benefit proposition for Wilton.

In recent years, the Wilton Board of Education has become more efficient in its usage of tax dollars, with the overall BOE budget increasing at only 1.1% annually over the past five years. That five-year growth rate is at the lowest level compared to our peer school districts, representing the cost efficiencies we in Wilton have been working towards. This financial efficiency was achieved despite absorbing a reduction of educational aid (ECS) from Hartford of approximately \$1.5 million annually during that same five-year period. The Wilton Board of Finance will continue efforts to reduce costs and contain education budget growth rates, outside of any legislation by the State.

We will work collaboratively with Hartford on making our local schools and municipal services more cost efficient using *voluntary* efforts with neighboring towns, and have already done so with Weston. We will also look to Hartford to provide relief from restrictive labor arrangements that impede voluntary efforts for shared services across town lines. Voluntary cost containment is where we should be putting our collective effort, not in forced consolidations that are not supported by the local community.

Town of Wilton Board of Finance

Jeffrey Rutishauser – Chairman

Walter Kress – Vice. Chairman

John Kalamarides – Clerk

Peter Balderston

Stewart Koenigsberg

Ceci Maher