

February 25, 2019

Dear Members of the Hearing Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition of bills SB 738, SB 457, SB 874 as they relate to school regionalization. It concerns me greatly that one of the assets that sets Connecticut apart from other states is in jeopardy. I am a product of the Connecticut public schools and have chosen to raise my family here so I could give my children the same education I had. With Connecticut's taxes continuing to increase and corporations leaving in droves, there isn't much that made me want to stay, but I knew it would be hard to find schools as good as ours somewhere else.

I understand that not only is there a push to regionalize small school districts, but there is also the possibility of conducting a study to gather data, which could cause the uncertainty of our education system to linger for a while. This will have a huge impact on our state! It will keep people from coming to live here, people's concerns will cause them to leave, and our property values will plummet. There is no need to waste time and any more money as studies have already been done. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving sponsored a study to analyze the impacts of regionalization on education and community. Their research suggests that 2,500-3,000 students is an ideal number to promote educational growth while also being cost effective. If you look at the top 25 ranked districts, only 3 have more than 4,000 students. If you look at the top ranked districts by population, only 3 get a grade of an "A". Clearly, data suggests that larger is not better!

My son was just recently diagnosed with a learning disability. The school has been terrific identifying where he needs help and supporting his growth. After two months working with the reading specialist he has moved up a reading level, something he has been struggling with for a while. I have direct and frequent contact with his teachers who work closely to keep him on track and moving forward. It is this quality of education that I wanted that kept me in Connecticut and brought me to a small town like Wilton. If we start creating large districts, it will be near impossible to maintain this quality of education.

I know our state is having a budget crisis and that something needs to be done. Sacrificing our children's future by diminishing the quality of their education is not the answer. We need to look elsewhere, such as the teacher's pensions, ways to bring revenue to the state, enticing companies to come and keeping the ones that are already here. Please, let's keep Connecticut's great reputation as being a wonderful place to raise a family and educate our children.

Sincerely,

Diana Yeager
Wilton, CT