

March 10, 2019

Testimony on S. B. 874, S. B. 457 and S. B. 738

No to forced regionalization of school districts.

If districts are failing financially, regionalization should be a voluntary solution. If any districts are failing academically, the same voluntary solution makes sense.

But forcing regionalization on school districts that provide high quality education and are not financially struggling does not resolve any existing problems.

In fact, forcing regionalization will create larger fiscal issues for Connecticut by accelerating population flight from the state and declining tax contributions, both from falling real estate values and fewer high income earners paying taxes.

Local control of schools has allowed Connecticut to have some of the best performing districts in the country, which act as a magnet for the best companies and generate a virtuous cycle for the state.

These bills are not about the quality of our schools or their efficiency. These forced regionalization used in these bills underlines the unfairness and lack of common sense of the approach.

These bills are about redistribution of income. Then let's have a frank debate about it. If income redistribution is needed to fix failing school districts in towns where there is not sufficient local income to provide a high quality education, then let's have a conversation about the goals and objectives these schools should be meeting, and find financing in the state budget. Will that require additional taxation? Probably. Let's be clear and transparent about what needs to be fixed and if any additional taxes are needed, they should be directed specifically to that objective. That would put Connecticut ahead of most states.

But let's not break what is working in good school systems that send children to top universities in the country, are a credit to our state and attract high quality companies and jobs to our state by avoiding the real conversation. None of the bills talk about quality of education or efficiency of smaller school districts. Forced regionalization would destroy both.

Sincerely,

Julio Zamora
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