

Baltimore County executive approves building a new Dulaney High School



By **Liz Bowie**
The Baltimore Sun

FEBRUARY 7, 2018, 2:35 PM

Baltimore County Executive **Kevin Kamenetz** on Wednesday committed to building a new Dulaney High School, switching his position after years of opposing such a move.

Kamenetz originally wanted to renovate the school, but parents of students who attend the school called for an entire new building and said the renovation would not be enough to give the school the updates it needed. Despite its reputation as one of the highest-performing high schools in the county, the building is one of the most deteriorated of the county's high schools. Pipes have burst multiple times a year, once filling an orchestra pit in the auditorium and another time sending a waterfall down the steps from the second to the first floor.

It lacks air-conditioning in all but one wing, brown water comes from some spigots, and it has rusted sinks, cracked tiles and cloudy windows.

"Years of research has finally created a fiscally wise outcome for this community," said Jennifer Tarr, a Dulaney High parent. "I'm grateful for everyone who worked to make this happen."

The county school board voted in March 2017 not to renovate the building, leaving its fate uncertain because Kamenetz would not commit the money to rebuilding. He had warned parents he felt the \$40 million renovation was the best option for the school system and wasn't happy when the school board declined to endorse the project. The money for the Dulaney renovation was transferred to other school projects, including a new middle school in the booming northeastern part of the county.

"We've been talking to the Dulaney parents for two years, and they were well aware of the facts," Kamenetz said in an interview last spring. "The facts are that we would love to build a brand-new school, but this is not a school where we would be adding seats, so it's not like we're gaining capacity for that substantial investment."

But in a letter sent to interim Superintendent Verletta White on Wednesday, Kamenetz said that because there was a need for 1,000 new seats in the central area of the county, he had decided to agree to fund a new building for the school.

The new facility would likely be built on the land next to the existing high school. Once it is completed, the old building would be torn down. The school would be built to hold 2,300 students, Kamenetz said.

The county executive also has committed to putting money in the budget to build a new Towson High School.

Yara Cheikh said Dulaney High parents such as her “are so pleased that the county executive has named Dulaney High School as the second high school to get design and planning money.

“It addresses our aging infrastructure, provides seats for projected overcrowding and makes economic sense,” she said. “This was the right thing to do.”

White said she had received the letter from Kamenetz. “Next steps will include discussions with our board of education and facilities staff to determine plans and timelines moving forward,” she said.

Kamenetz, a Democrat, is running for his party’s nomination for governor. Gov. Larry Hogan is scheduled to visit Dulaney High next week.

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