

Thank you for giving this opportunity to speak. My name is Andy Do and I am the President of the Student Government Association at Paint Branch High School.

Because the modernization of Paint Branch High School has been pushed back, the student body is not able to fully excel in its education. I am here to remind all of you why Paint Branch is in desperate need of a new school. This issue should not simply be brushed aside, but instead, it should be a priority.

Although I will not be here to experience and learn in the new building, I believe in this school and I believe that it deserves the best.

Paint Branch has been awaiting a new school for a number of years.

With the economy in turmoil, it is easy to push this situation to the back of our minds. It is also easy to postpone the date of renovation.

However, Paint Branch High School is not responsible for the current state of the economy. Our staff and students have been waiting patiently for years for a modernized school. I believe that we should not be held accountable.

Paint Branch High School has become a second home to me and my fellow peers.

The modernization of our school will create a safer, more comfortable space, not only for educational purposes, but also for our emotional and social growth.

We spend six hours learning each day, and two more hours if we play sports or participate in a club, five days a week. Let us assume that the average student spends about seven hours a day at school, five days a week, adding up to 35 hours. We attend school for nine months out of the year. That's 35 hours a week, 9 months out of the year that we spend our waking hours at Paint Branch.

What makes a home a home? A home is comfortable, pleasant, and cozy. We feel satisfied in our own homes. My own home, my personal living quarters, represents all these qualities. I am able to accomplish what is needed of me perfectly safe and comfortable environment. Paint Branch is not simply just an educational facility but it is supposed to be my second home. It should contain the same atmosphere as our own homes. However, sometimes, our current building does not welcome us and send us that message.

Last year, on a cold November morning, I was told that there was some kind of problem in the school as I got off the bus. No one was allowed into the school. I figured that whatever had occurred would be fixed in a few minutes. But those minutes began to turn into hours.

The students were moved to the football stands to wait. For about two hours, we stood in the cold 40 degree weather. After about 2 hours, we were finally let into the school. Eventually, we learned that there was a small fire in the ceiling outside our Media Center due to a wiring situation. Our school is old and old wires and things like them wear out. The school administration did the best it could to keep us comfortable but in that situation what else can they do, they could not change or fix the school so that these events were to surely never happen again. Our safety was put at risk because of our school's condition. What if this situation happened in fourth period when students and staff were in class?

I suspect that some students and staff might have gotten hurt. The situation could have caused panic, provoking students to evacuate the school as fast as possible. However, the school's hallways are usually crammed, making students hustle and jumble as they hurry to class. This would have created more of a problem.

I'm thankful that no one was hurt when this happened. I'm also thankful that this situation occurred during the morning. Nevertheless, this still jeopardized the students' and staffs' safety.

As a current senior, I have watched the school grow tremendously from year to year. Each year, the freshmen class that enters our school becomes bigger than the last. I am pleased too see that so many students find an interest in coming to our school, but an increase of students has created populous hallways, overflowing classrooms, and a limited amount of parking spaces.

Our crowded hallways create traffic jams. It is almost always a guarantee to accidentally collide into someone. Sometimes, there are only certain routes a student can take to get from Point A to Point B. For example, when the bell rings, our students rush out of their classrooms in order to get to their lockers or go to their next class. The fastest route to get from the Media Center to the front of the building is through a set of double doors.

Because a large amount of people are crowded at this area, it takes about two minutes just to get through. Just look at me, I'm a pretty skinny guy, and for me, it's even difficult to pass through.

Paint Branch has roughly 1800 students, despite the fact that the more, the merrier, our school can barely hold all of us. It is very difficult for our student body to be able to come together and be in the same place at the same time. The auditorium cannot hold all of us; the gym cannot hold all of us; even the football stands are beginning to become a bit congested.

Our school doesn't just endure wire problems or crowded hallways, the list could go on. Yes, we are still able to learn in our schools and we're still able to have fun, but why can't we have the best facility to learn in or have fun in? Why can't we reach our full potential?

High school is not just supposed to be about learning chemistry and calculus in a building. High school is a place where we make lifelong friends and memories we will take with us into college and beyond. High school is part of our life journeys, a journey that should not take place in a school in these condition.

I believe that the modernization of Paint Branch will not only help us academically, but also socially. The future students of Paint Branch will be able to experience a second home.