

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Charlotte Amalie High Students Protest Use Of Athletic Field For Modular Units

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ST. THOMAS -- Students from the Charlotte Amalie High School on Wednesday marched in protest against the Department of Education's decision to place modular units for the Addelita Cancryn Junior High School on their athletic field. The march's most potent stop was at the Earl B. Ottley Legislature here, where students -- many of them from C.A.H.S.'s marching band -- performed while protesting the D.O.E. action.

"Don't steal the field!" some chanted as others responded with, "Don't steal it!"

At the Legislature, politicians took the opportunity to applaud students for protesting.

"Every movement starts with young people," said Senator Janelle Sarauw, who carried

the protest live on her Facebook platform. "Every single movement, and we stand with you."

Before Ms. Sarauw spoke, Senator Jean Forde, who chairs the Committee on Education, said D.O.E. had "taken the students for granted, and that "they have disrespected you." The students responded with deafening cheers and applause to those remarks. "They have not come to you in fact and ask you what is your opinion," Mr. Forde said.

The modular units are expected to be in use for three years or more, Governor Mapp once told The Consortium.

The students also protested at the D.O.E. itself, where they met with the department's commissioner, Sharon McCollum, and Anthony Thomas, Ms. McCollum's chief of staff. The commissioner told the ardent students that she had sought other options to place the Addelita Cancryn modular units, but that no better alternatives were available, especially when working with FEMA, whose Army Corps of Engineers require certain criteria.

And even before the 2017 storms, the field was slated for construction and would have been closed, the commissioner said.

On Tuesday, D.O.E invited the community to a town hall meeting scheduled on Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. at the Charlotte Amalie High School Ruth E. Thomas Auditorium. The department said the meeting will update the community on D.O.E.'s 2018 Temporary School Facilities Project and address residents' concerns, particularly site selections of the temporary facilities in the St. Thomas - St. John District.