

SB0276

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I am Associate Professor of Anthropology at the Johns Hopkins University and resident of the Baltimore City. I have conducted long-term social science research in Latin America, focusing on the impact of state violence on low-income neighborhoods, including drug raids, street policing, police occupation, and extrajudicial killings. I am writing in support of Senator Jill Carter's SB0276, which would repeal the legislation giving Johns Hopkins University permission to establish its own private, armed police department.

In Spring 2019 to Fall 2019, I acted as non-voting Member Secretary to the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Faculty Assembly Fact Finding Committee on the Garland Hall Sit-In. The Sit-In was precipitated as a result of JHU's determination to move forward with the private police plan, after the passage of SB793/HB1094 by the Maryland General Assembly and despite multiple protests by students, faculty, and community members. The JHU administration has often cited "125 stakeholder meetings". However, the Fact Finding Committee heard testimony from students who reported that their feedback was routinely minimized or disregarded. Attracting a diverse, expansive group of students, the Sit-In represented a substantial fraction of the Homewood student population and the Sit-In's aims (namely, the opposition to the establishment of an armed, private police force) was endorsed by the Student Government Association. The Sit-In lasted 35 days, because the university administration circumvented their own policy by allowing the protestors to stay overnight in the building and then, they refused to meet or negotiated with the protestors because they were staying in the building. The administration's own decisions created a dangerous situation, which escalated in the final days of the Sit-In. The night of May 7, 2019, then Research Professor Daniel Povey led a group of non-JHU affiliates into a violent altercation with the protestors, who were verbally and physically assaulted by this group. (The group was reported to have shouted racial slurs at the protestors, in addition to dragging a student down the stairs by her hair and punching another student in the face.) Distressed student protestors approached a badged JHU Security and told him they were being assaulted. JHU Security responded dismissively, saying that they were only there "to protect Johns Hopkins property." Thankfully, no one was seriously injured or killed during this chaotic altercation while JHU Security looked on. The Sit-In ended by a show of force involving approximately 80 officers from the Baltimore City Police Department, which, according to the Fact-Finding Committee findings, suggested a lack of appropriate coordination between University administration and law enforcement concerning the appropriate police response. The full report can be found on the Homewood Faculty Association website: <https://facultyassembly.jhu.edu/files/2019/12/Homewood-Faculty-Assembly-Fact-Finding-Committee-Report.pdf>

As a faculty who has worked long-term in neighborhoods impacted by armed police and who live the effects of profiling, leading to mass incarceration, and fugitive lives, I have seen and documented the devastating effects on families as well as the human rights violations that occur under the banner of "law and order". For this reason and as a Baltimore City resident,

who does not want to see an armed police on campus that profiles students and residents alike, I have long opposed the private police force. For this reason, I also was a co-organizer of the "Letter calling on President Daniels to abandon the formation of an armed private police force at Johns Hopkins University" which gathered over 6000 signatures, including nearly 400 faculty across the University.

However, in my capacity as the Member Secretary of the Fact Finding Committee, I was astounded by JHU administration's intransigent unwillingness to listen to the community, the "we set the rules and can break them" exceptionality that the administration espoused with respect to the student protestors, and finally the appalling manner by which JHU security reneged on its duty to protect human life above property in the face of what could have been a life-threatening, violent encounter. Given what has been documented by the Fact Finding Committee, the deep issues with institutional transparency paired with an armed, private police force -- that is answerable to a private institution and not the elected leaders of Baltimore City - - would create a dangerous situation for students, faculty, staff, and Baltimore City residents who would be exposed to this policing.

I therefore strongly support SB0276. Thank you Senator Jill Carter.