

I am a Johns Hopkins graduate student, proud resident of Baltimore City, and life-long Marylander. I am writing in support of Senator Jill Carter's SB0276, which would repeal the legislation giving Johns Hopkins University permission to found its own private, armed police department.

The original legislation was not borne by evidence or community support, and its approval was a forced process that went against the expressed will of both the Hopkins community and adjacent neighborhoods. Johns Hopkins' own students, faculty, and physicians have offered signed petitions, peaceful protests, and overwhelming public dissent in an effort to clearly convey that we do not want this. Members of Hopkins-adjacent communities have similarly come forward in firm opposition. Despite this, Johns Hopkins University invoked under-handed tactics in order to dismiss community concerns; they are playing a waiting game by planning to set up the police department only after the original dissenters have left the University. No effort has been made to address the effect of armed police on neighborhood health, nor the potential deleterious influence on the world-renown hospital that would be under the private police's jurisdiction.

On both a personal and intellectual level, I disagree wholeheartedly with establishing a private, armed police department at the University. There is simply no need; Johns Hopkins contracts unarmed security personnel, who provide security escorts including motor transportation at any time of day, staffed security booths on every block, and a guard posted at each building entrance. Students receive email notifications for any crime to occur on or near a Hopkins campus, so I can confidently say that every conflict could have been avoided by utilizing the existing security. Even so, conflicts are rarely violent, and even more rarely do they involve a weapon. Armed police are not necessary and would only increase the likelihood of violence in such instances.

The legislation is a waste of money, time, and attention. We need to place police under community control, not multiply firearms on our city streets based on a model of violent subjugation. Private police forces are even less accountable than the horror show that is the Baltimore City police. Johns Hopkins jammed this legislation down the throat of Baltimore. It is high time to extract it.

Sincerely,

Catherine LaCourse