

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Ron J. Daniels, President, Johns Hopkins University
Kevin W. Sowers, President, Johns Hopkins Health System; Executive Vice President of
Johns Hopkins Medicine
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DATE: January 21, 2021

On behalf of Johns Hopkins University Johns Hopkins University and Medicine, we respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 276, Johns Hopkins University – Police Department – Repeal. The proposed legislation would prematurely prevent Johns Hopkins from advancing the important goal of reducing violent crime in Baltimore. It would take away a vital tool without offering a viable replacement. It would cast aside thousands of hours of legislative and community debate, discussion, and deliberation without providing a solution to the ongoing violence. In short, it would do nothing to improve the safety and security of our neighborhoods and would instead undermine a collaborative community effort to establish a model police department.

Two years ago, the Maryland legislature passed the Community Safety and Strengthening Act. This law was the result of countless hours of community input, exhaustive academic research, benchmarking and peer analysis, and extensive legislative deliberation and review, as detailed in the [*Interim Study on Approaches to Improving Public Safety on and around Johns Hopkins University Campuses*](#). The law embodied the shared goal of improving safety and reducing violent crime in Baltimore through a series of community-based approaches that include economic development grants and youth employment and mentoring. It also authorized Johns Hopkins to develop a small, accountable, and transparent university-based police department held to the strictest, most progressive and most reform-minded legal mandates in the state and across the country.

Among other provisions, the Community Safety and Strengthening Act requires Johns Hopkins to enter into a publicly available memorandum of understanding with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) regarding jurisdiction and operation. The law broadly restricts the operational jurisdiction of the university police department to areas on and immediately adjacent to its campuses, where it will share law enforcement responsibilities with and alleviate current demands upon the BPD. The university police department is required to comply with the Maryland Public Information Act and extensive reporting requirements to the city, state and general public that include and go far beyond any other police department's requirements in Maryland. And ten years after enactment of the legislation, an independent evaluation will provide a public review of the department and offer a recommendation to the General Assembly to extend or reauthorize the department.

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The community will have an unprecedented level of input and oversight of the department. A community Accountability Board will meet regularly to review policies and procedures of the department, there will be a public complaint process and an administrative hearing board, and the department will be subject to the Baltimore City Civilian Review Board.

Also central to the Community Safety and Strengthening Act are a series of non-law enforcement programs intended to combat violent crime and improve the city. These include a new Police Athletic League and matching grant dollars for law enforcement cadet programs, \$100,000 for the East Baltimore Historical Library, and \$1 million per year in summer employment opportunities for youth.

Individually, these steps reflect the seriousness with which Johns Hopkins views violent crime and our responsibility to aid in its reduction. Together, they represent a broad, creative and inclusive approach to helping make our neighborhoods safer for all who live, learn, work and receive patient care here.

Consistent with both the mandate of the legislature and our belief that the best path forward is arm-in-arm with our community and stakeholders, we decided in June to pause the implementation of the university police department in light of the shocking acts of police violence that called our nation to action and in anticipation of further policy reforms and direction from the Maryland General Assembly. We believed at the time, and we continue to believe, that moving forward while elected leaders in Baltimore and Maryland are embarking on a necessary and ambitious agenda of progressive police reform would have been premature and insensitive, and we proceeded with the caution and community-first approach that the General Assembly urges in the law itself.

In the meantime, we have not retreated from our commitment to take every step possible to address the challenge of violent crime in our community. We have continued to improve our existing security operations – through enhanced training, professional development, and oversight – while also developing and investing in non-police approaches to public safety, like the new \$6 million, 4-year JHU Innovation Fund for Community Safety to support community-led projects designed to reduce violence in the near term.

Our city leadership is a critical partner in this effort, and we continue to think about how we can leverage our resources and expertise to support the city's broader public safety agenda. This includes providing early financial support for the city's effort to bring Focused Deterrence, a nationally-recognized and evidence-based model for crime reduction, to Baltimore and serving as a founding member and lead sponsor of the Greater Baltimore Region Integrated Crisis System (GBRICS), a \$45 million, multi-hospital, regional collaboration to expand community based behavioral health crisis services in Baltimore City and Baltimore, Howard and Carroll Counties.

While those efforts continue to move forward, we remain wholly committed to establishing the Johns Hopkins Police Department, especially in light of the difficult reality of violent crime in and around our campus. Of the violent crime reported across Baltimore college and university campuses in 2019, Johns Hopkins alone accounted for 73% of aggravated assaults – 55% on the East Baltimore campus alone – and 37% of robberies.¹

¹ Data collected from Annual Security Reports of Baltimore colleges and universities, including all three Johns Hopkins campuses

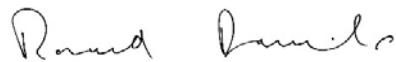
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At the same time, we believe that we have an important opportunity to work with our new city and state leadership to develop meaningful and lasting reforms that will improve every law enforcement agency in Maryland – including the Johns Hopkins Police Department.

We look forward to continuing this work with the legislature and to the ongoing and critically important efforts to end the scourge of violent crime in our hometown.

We urge the committee to vote no on Senate Bill 276.

Signed,



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cc: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee