

SBO276

My name is Agustina Quesada. I reside at 3628 Keswick Road, Baltimore, MD, 21211 and call Baltimore my home. I graduated from Johns Hopkins in May 2019 with a bachelor's in physics and then worked at the University as a mechanical engineer for a year.

I am writing in support of [SB0276](#), to repeal the ability of Johns Hopkins University to create their own private police force.

Below I will discuss my reasons for the support of this bill:

1. The undemocratic nature of the process in which the original bill was established and the force was planned.
2. Reasons for the disapproval of the force.

1. Johns Hopkins has a troubling history of subverting democracy, and their lobbying for the creation of their own police force is no exception.

(i) The police force faces overwhelming opposition.

The University spent \$581,000 on lobbying in Annapolis during the push for the bill and donated \$16,000 to Mayor Pugh's campaign. Mayor Pugh has been sentenced to prison for fraud, tax evasion, and conspiracy, and Cheryl Glenn, one of the two sponsors of the bill, pleaded guilty to bribery and fraud. The bill came as a surprise to many. The University decided it wanted a police force and has stuck to their unilateral decision.

Over the next few years, the administration willfully ignored the rallies and pleas to end the planning of the force from hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and Baltimore residents. President Ronald Daniels refused to meet with several student groups on the subject. Below are some details which illuminate the scale of the opposition.

Due to a lack of response from the University, on April 3, 2019, students and community members began an occupation of the administrative building which lasted for 35 days. Over the course of the sit-in, hundreds participated in rallies against the police force. On April 3, over 250 people attended a "West Wednesday" rally near the Homewood campus to protest the private police. "West Wednesday" is a rally that occurs every Wednesday since 2013, demanding justice for the killing of Tyrone West by Morgan State University Police Officer David Lewis. There were 3 more well-attended West Wednesday rallies in conjunction with the JHU Sit-In. These are just a few of the many rallies that have been held to oppose the private police.

The sit-in was only able to last so long due to the vast opposition of the police force by students, staff, faculty, and community members, and their support of the JHU Sit-in. Several faculty members attended sit-in events, talks, and rallies. As of then, 49 community associations opposed the creation of the police force. UNITE HERE Local 7, the union representing dining workers at Homewood campus, issued a [statement](#) in opposition. A Student Government Association (SGA) referendum found that (as of May 2019), 73.5% of the 2070 undergraduates polled opposed the

private police. Subsequently, the SGA issued a [resolution](#) in opposition to the police. Many student groups oppose the private police force, including the [African Students Association](#) and [13 groups](#) of the Johns Hopkins Inter-Asian Council. A [letter](#) signed by over 100 faculty members condemned the creation process, calling it “undemocratic.” During the May 23, 2019 graduation, 32 graduating seniors refused to shake the President’s hand.

The sentiment against Baltimore university private police forces is not unique to Hopkins. Many MICA students supported the sit-in, and on May 15, 2019, the president issued a campus-wide email stating that the College has no intention of pursuing their own police force: “For MICA, our community-based approach to campus safety has been the right strategy; we will continue to engage our students, faculty, staff, and neighbors to ensure its effectiveness.”

A description of the communications that occurred during the JHU Sit-In illustrates the University’s lack of commitment to transparency and democracy. One of the demands of the JHU Sit-In was for a meeting with President Daniels which would be broadcasted live for anyone interested to see. President Daniels said that he would only meet if everyone left the building, however his refusal to meet with previously meant that he had [established distrust](#), and so the JHU Sit-In rejected his caveat of vacating the building as a condition of negotiation. On May 6, Daniels offered a meeting for [less than 24 hours in advance](#). It was [such a short notice](#) that the JHU Sit-In was unable to organize to respond as a group and attend. No such open meeting happened until July 24, 2019, after continual pressure from the JHU Sit-In. This meeting was open only to students, with the administration explicitly barring community members from attending. During the meeting, the administration [refused](#) to consider the decision of establishing a private police force. As President Daniels told two students during the sit-in on April 3, to him democracy means “accepting the decision that was already made.” Even if that decision was made undemocratically, it seems. Despite assurances that there will be more meetings, there has yet to be another meeting with the JHU Sit-In.

In June 2020, [81 student groups](#) signed a statement of solidarity in opposition to the police force. The Hopkins Grad Union also issued a [statement](#) in opposition. On June 20, 2019, 503 alumni signed a [letter](#) condemning the private police force. As of June 28, 2020, 382 faculty signed a [petition](#) opposing the force, along with 2,322 alumni, 347 staff, 970 undergrads, 954 graduate students, post-docs, and trainees, and 1,007 Baltimore residents. As of June 30, 2020, there were a total of [6152](#) signatures on that petition. And during the new school year, a new organization formed: the Coalition Against Policing by Hopkins, which includes mostly students unaffiliated with the JHU Sit-In. All of this demonstrates the continual opposition to the police force since the bill was enacted.

(ii) The University claims that it has made a great effort at engaging the community to guide its decision. This is misleading.

The following an excerpt a friend who attended the meetings wrote:

Many heard about the plans to form a private police force for the first time shortly after the first bill was introduced to the Summer 2018 regular session on March 5, 2018. There were no prior community engagement attempts. Had it not been for the immediate resistance from the community, which was enough to halt the state legislature’s

deliberations, the bill would have taken effect as of October 1, 2018. It was only after the first bill was halted that the administration decided to engage in the necessary formalities to be able to claim that they received input from the community.

In the public discussion series, forums, and meetings, community members were not given a platform. They were not allowed to steer the conversation and were given very limited time at the end of each event to voice concerns. They were discouraged from making statements that were not phrased as questions, and the administration constantly filibustered in order to take up most of the time. Despite the fact that nearly all community members who voiced their opinions opposed the police force, it was clear that the administration only intended to make the claim that differing viewpoints had been heard and had no real plans to reconsider public safety initiatives.

Part of these attempts at community engagement consisted of a 3-part discussion series titled “The Challenges of 21st Century Policing,” during which experts were invited to be panelists in moderated discussions followed by a short Q&A session. In the first session about the landscape of university policing, it was rightfully pointed out that every panelist had significant experience in law enforcement and was in support of the proposed police force. One of panelists was Cedric Alexander, Public Safety Director of DeKalb County, Georgia. He argued that “racial profiling begins at the top;” if a chief is tolerant of profiling, then that attitude will trickle down. He argued that a top-down approach is how police departments can achieve greater transparency. However, residents of his county say he’s failed to fix a police department sorely in need of reform. After the 2014 police murder of Kevin Davis, a Black man who had called 911 himself, DCPD conducted an internal investigation for 38 days. It was only after protesters staged a sit-in outside the local courthouse that Alexander handed over the probe to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Critics say he has mishandled numerous responses to police shootings and disregarded community concerns. He failed to enact crisis training reform until after Anthony Hill, a veteran with bipolar disorder, was killed by a DCPD officer in 2015. Serving as an analyst for CNN, Alexander has condemned the Baltimore uprising and defended BPD’s handling of the Freddie Gray case.

Another panelist was Leonard Hamm, who argued that an advantage of university police departments is the increased transparency that results from “better relationships with the community.” Ironically, Leonard Hamm was Director of Public Safety at Baltimore’s Coppin State University when 18 year-old Lavar Douglas was killed by Coppin State campus police in 2016. It was only after the NYT drew attention to the case in a five-part podcast that he finally released the name of the officer who killed Douglas, two years after the shooting.

Another panelist was Maureen Rush, the superintendent of Penn Police which Hopkins also considers an excellent model and plans to emulate. Her own campus officers unionized against body cameras, which had been demanded by all Black student groups on campus, and stipulated in their new contract that they must be able to review all body camera footage.

In the short Q&A session that followed, the vast majority of those asking questions were opposed to the police force. Community members raised the issue that Johns Hopkins

Hospital has not put resources into the community for over 40 years, that Hopkins still avoids taxes, and that private police forces across the nation lack accountability. A University of Chicago alum noted that 93% of people stopped by their campus police were Black. A University of Pennsylvania alum brought up a 2004 report on racial profiling and mentioned the fact that a majority of suspects identified by Homewood crime alerts are Black males between the ages of 17 to 23. Others mentioned the University's role in gentrification and creating crime and poverty in Baltimore, while refusing to pay workers a living wage.

The second session took place on November 9, 2018. One panelist, Nancy La Vigne, Vice President for Justice Policy at the Urban Institute, talked about cultural pathologies within police departments. She stressed that the communities she is primarily concerned about are over-policed minority communities, and the need to consider that "the legacy of white supremacy [and] genocide is carried with an officer in blue." According to another panelist Christy Lopez, Distinguished Visitor From Practice at Georgetown Law School, "even policing that is constitutional or lawful is an intrusion on peoples' lives." She continued to say, "police are not the primary driver of bringing down violence or creating safety" and that "policing is actually a small component of these major sets of issues." The major theme raised was how Hopkins can create an accountable police force given the power of the Fraternal Order of Police and Maryland police. The last panelist, Vesla Weaver, Associate Professor of Political Science and Sociology at JHU, read out three excerpts from accounts of Black residents who had been traumatized by police encounters since they were children. When asked about community engagement, all panelists agreed that representation in research is "woefully biased" and La Vigne noted that the people who could be present at the venue at 11am were not representative of the community. Lopez stressed the need for "front-end accountability" as opposed to "rear-end" accountability mechanisms such as review boards, which work after harm was done and police departments are on the defensive. Once again, most questions at the end were critical of private policing. One community member asked about the Maryland Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights, and Lopez responded that due to the very aberrational Bill of Rights, it is "impossible" for police officers to be held accountable. While the second session still did not provide an adequate platform for community members to control public discourse, the panelists were both skeptical and critical of model efforts to achieve accountability.

The university held open forums, one in the Homewood area and one in East Baltimore. The first forum in the Homewood area was held on November 13, 2018. Despite stating that the forum was an opportunity to "hear directly from neighbors, students, faculty and staff about their experiences, recommendations and concerns related to the proposed campus police department," the majority of the talking was done by then Vice President of Security Melissa Hyatt, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration Daniel Ennis, Special Advisor to the Office of the Vice President Jeanne Hitchcock, and President Daniels. For an hour and a half, Ennis, Hitchcock, Daniels, and Hyatt spent the so-called forum justifying their plans to the audience, citing an easily disproved uptick in crime and alluding to active shooter threats. After their presentation, a community resident immediately pointed out that less than 30 minutes for questions remained, challenging the panel on how they can justifiably call this an "open forum." The resident complained that they did not come there to be lectured at by the administration the entire time. Hitchcock conceded this point and by the end, after others had raised the same complaints, remarked "I don't think we heard a lot from community today." Despite this concern, and their description of the event as a place to hear "experiences, recommendations and concerns," the panelists repeatedly requested

that community members only ask questions rather than make statements, and even after some residents made comments rather than pose questions anyway, the panelists responded and took up even more time. Only one person made a statement in support of the police force, while the rest were critical.

The second forum in East Baltimore was held on November 26, 2018 and drew a large turnout from the community. At start of the forum, Hitchcock said they were shortening the administration's opening remarks to emphasize how they are listening to feedback. During his opening remarks, Daniels stressed that the university is trying to create a public service, despite Hopkins being a private institution. Daniels stated that "we're going to" have legislation introduced authorizing private police, betraying their intentions to solicit feedback but without expecting to reconsider the initiative. Daniels once again talked about crime rates, the number of shootings in Baltimore, an incident where an affiliate was tackled near the East Baltimore campus, and again evoked other universities having police forces as a reason for Hopkins to have one, claiming that Hopkins is behind peer institutions. Daniels argued that a "silent majority" supports the police force but cannot be vocal about it. Daniels promised to pursue accountability mechanisms and to keep the police force at 100 officers across all campuses. After half an hour of opening remarks from Daniels and Hyatt, the first question was about what accountability mechanisms look like. Daniels admitted to not being aware of a student shot by campus cops during a mental health episode at the University of Chicago. (The student later joined the JHU Sit-In via a video call on the 300th West Wednesday Rally during the escalation to a lockdown on May 1, 2019). Hyatt answered that there would be an internal investigation, a criminal investigation, and perhaps a third-party investigation. Another neighborhood resident mentioned the police killing of Sam DuBose by University of Cincinnati police, after which the cop who killed him received a settlement from the university. Overall, the overwhelming sentiment was again the community's lack of trust in Hopkins, to which Daniels took personal offense, claiming that "we are the community" and that "we're not talking about blind trust."

In a joint meeting with the Harwood Community Association and the Abell Improvement Association, Vice President of Security Melissa Hyatt gave a 45-minute presentation on the logistics of a Johns Hopkins Police Department. Hyatt had not expected to hear any opposition and was brought back into the room to hear a 10-minute counter-presentation from a member of Students Against Private Police. In the presentation, SAPP members raised concerns about racial profiling, accountability, and numerous police killings by campus police officers that resulted in no accountability for the killers. Afterwards, both community organizations voted to oppose the police force.

These forums were not recorded and there were no meeting minutes. They occurred during normal working hours, making it hard for community members to attend. Most of the other meetings were held behind closed doors, also with no form of recording. Recording of open meetings was denied. However flawed, President Daniels made no efforts to maintain these channels once the bill was passed.

In addition, The JHU Government and Community Affairs office focuses mainly on government affairs and is understaffed. There should be an office dedicated to community affairs alone. According to the JHU Sit-In, residents have been [ignored](#) by this office.

The President, Provost, CEO of JH Hospital, and community engagement liaisons spend more time working with those who have power rather than engaging with people who are vulnerable to the decisions that will be made.

It was announced at a search committee meeting for the Vice President of Security that the private police will begin patrolling in East Baltimore and later extend its patrol area because undisclosed “community leaders” are supported. There was a meeting the night before in East Baltimore, and this was not mentioned.

(iii) The University enjoys an authoritarian structure of decision making. It has lost its focus as an institution of education and operates as a corporation buying real estate. Such an institution is incapable of making democratic decisions.

Financial and administrative authority is centralized under President Daniels and his highly-paid advisers. Major decisions are made in his cabinet, composed of 12 vice presidents, an acting vice president, a vice provost, a secretary, and three senior advisers. Of the vice presidents, only the provost has significant classroom and research experience. The Board of Trustees has 36 members that are almost all from outside academia. The Faculty Budget Advisory Committee has members hand-picked by administrators. In some universities there are faculty senates so faculty has some leverage on university decisions. Johns Hopkins does not have such a structure in place.

It is astonishing that one of the leading schools of public health refuses to take a public health approach to violence. The administration is a corporation out of touch with its faculty. As I heard from a faculty member, there is a lot of intimidation and fear of retaliation among faculty. As an example, Johns Hopkins threatened faculty who attended the Sit-In.

2. Some reasons for opposing the private police force:

(i) The failure of police departments across the country has been highlighted by the massive BLM protests. Reforms over the past six years have proved ineffectual, and a model for a responsible and safe police force just does not exist.

Establishing a private police force strengthens Hopkins’ relationship with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), which experienced one of the largest police corruption cases in US history.

(ii) Existing campus university police face the same problems that are being highlighted in these protests and pose a particular threat towards Black students and community members.

I have already mentioned the case of Tyrone West, and I would like to bring your attention to these additional cases which display the failures of policing:

Coppin State University:

- In 2016, Lavar Douglas, a Black teen, was shot and killed by a campus officer.

University of Alabama:

- In 2012, Gilbert Collar, a naked student who on psychedelic drugs, was shot and killed by campus officer, who had access to pepper spray and a baton.

Portland State University:

- In 2018, Jason Washington, a Black US postal worker and Navy veteran who was attempting to break up a fight, was at fatally shot at 9 times by two campus officers.

University of Cincinnati:

- In 2015, Sam Dubose, an unarmed Black man, was shot and killed at a traffic stop by a campus officer. A grand jury indicted the officer on charges of murder and manslaughter.

Yale:

- In 2015, [Tahj Blow](#), a Black student who was leaving the library, was held at gunpoint because the officers thought he was a suspect from a tweet.
- In 2018, [Lolade Siyonbola](#), a Black graduate student, was taking a nap in her dorm common room when a White Ph.D student woke her up and called the police on her.
- In 2019, [a campus police officer](#) was one of the two officers who shot an unarmed Black woman who was in the car a mile from campus.

Georgia Tech:

- In 2018, [Scout Schultz](#), a student with clinical depression, was shot and killed by a campus officer.

Colorado University:

- In 2017, Jeremy Holmes, a mentally ill student, was shot and killed by a campus officer.

University of Chicago:

- In 2018, Charles Thomas, a Black student, was shot at by a campus officer.

South Dakota State University:

- In 2018, [two campus officers](#) arrested a teen for walking across campus. The officer handcuffed her and restrained her face-down. As a result, her wrists her dislocated.

American University:

- In 2019, [a Black student](#) was dragged by multiple campus police officers out of her dorm under false claims.

University of the Incarnate Word:

- In 2013, [a campus officer](#) killed a student.

University of Utah:

- In 2018, [Lauren McCluskey](#), a student, warned campus police of her ex-boyfriend more than 20 times before he murdered her. He had been seen on campus, but nothing was done.

Drexel University:

- In 2011, [a campus officer](#) used his police car to ram an unarmed fleeing suspect into a wall. The university police chief told the Philadelphia police not to investigate the incident and ruled it an accident.

Temple University:

- In 2016, [two campus officers](#) fatally tortured one of their girlfriends.
- From 2015-2017, 2.2% of drug-related incidents (including alcohol) resulted in arrests by on campus, while on the streets, [50%](#) of drug-related incidents resulted in arrests by campus police.

University of Pennsylvania:

- From 2012-2015, [seven cases](#) of excessive force and violation of civil rights have been filed against campus police.

University of California:

- From 2015 to the present, [73%](#) of people from traffic stops made by UCPD were Black. The University operates in a primarily Black neighborhood, so most of the stops made were of the neighbors themselves. In addition, Black drivers stopped by UCPD are [cited at twice the rate](#) and searched at five times the rate in comparison to White drivers. From April 2018 to April 2020, [96%](#) of people stopped in the field by UCPD were Black.
- In 2010, UCPD placed a Black student in a [chokehold](#) and pinned him down for being “unruly” in the library’s silent level.
- In 2006, a UCLA student, [Mostafa Tabatabaiejad](#), was tased by campus police for refusing to show his ID.

These are not exceptions to a rule. These are just a very small amount of the total cases that result from university policing, and they should be warning enough that the mere presence of an armed police force on a university campus is dangerous. The *Interim Study* conducted by Johns Hopkins conveniently leaves out the problems with policing. Issues can be found in the police departments of all institutions that Johns Hopkins has identifies as peers. In addition, given the issues of transparency the institution already harbors, investigations into the misconduct of private police officers are likely to be even less transparent than those concerning public police officers. Suggesting that JHU could implement a “safe” and indiscriminatory police force is willfully naïve.

Police with weapons on campus will increase fear, especially for minority students. We need mental health responders and violence interrupters, not police. (See Section (vi).)

(iii) Johns Hopkins Security is already discriminatory and so is the University as a whole.

As I hope will be brought up in further detail by other testimonies, Black and Brown students and Baltimoreans are already disproportionately targeted by Johns Hopkins security and BPD. Private police on campus are likely to exacerbate the racial profiling that already occurs, with even more dangerous and potentially fatal consequences.

In 2011, a White student called security on a Black student in the library. Security officers responded. Lester Spence, a JHU professor of political science and Africana studies correctly [said](#), “That security force did what they were tasked to do. So, even if we have a police force that was properly trained, there’s that issue that can’t really be reconciled.”

Discrimination is an institutional problem as well. In Fall 2015, over 200 student protesters surrounded President Daniels, demanding that the administration respond to structural racism and inequality on campus.

(iv) The University does not have the trust of the community... how they can possibly be creating a police force that will be welcomed by it?

President Daniels is a Board Member of the East Baltimore Development Initiative (EBDI). Hitchcock, who was present for the November 26, 2018 forum in East Baltimore, is the Board Chair. JHU has been involved in the EBDI since 2001. The EBDI forcibly displaced 800 Black families in East Baltimore and has the intention of removing 750 houses in 88 acres of land in the Middle East neighborhood. On January 13, 2020, the EBDI disgustingly [held](#) a "demolition celebration to commemorate tearing down the remaining blight in the northwest area of Eager park," which was met by protests. Their actions have directly resulted in homelessness and disrupted whatever stability the former residents might have had.

In the Minority Inclusion Agreement signed in April 2002, the EBDI and its founders promised 8,000 new jobs and the establishment of a community reinvestment fund. As of today, both of these promises have been broken. As of 2019, JHU has created only about 1,500 jobs, 20% of that promise. The funds allocated for JHPD should be going toward their unfulfilled promise.

One wonders why JHU planned to initially deploy their armed police force in the Middle East neighborhood.

The University is no friend to its workers as well, with a [large history](#) of crushing unions. Also, a troubling history of suing patients.

Establishing a private police force would continue Hopkins' legacy of exploiting Baltimore citizens, further damaging the tense relationship between Hopkins and Baltimore communities. The borders of Johns Hopkins are ill-defined and expanding, as the institution continues to gentrify the city. A police force accountable to a private entity rather than community members will impact those living, working, and traveling in and around Hopkins properties.

(v) The University claims that it does not have enough funding. Where will the funds for the private police come from?

In addition to the funding that is needed to complete the multi-million EBDI promise, JHU has been taking extreme measures during the pandemic. They [freezed](#) their employees' retirement account contributions in a decision that involved no meaningful faculty votes, no consulting of any institutions of faculty governance, and no mention of alternatives or explanations; yet another example of their issues with transparency. The financial problem is, the university set nothing aside in anticipation of risks, despite the Johns Hopkins Hospital having a 20 year-old Office of Critical Event Preparedness and Response. Rather, Hopkins has continually engaged in new expensive building and gentrification projects. They have lost sight of their role as an institution of education and have become a corporation operating on margins. Adding another expensive project—an unwanted police force, is tipping over their already precarious stability.

(vi) Violence Interruption has shown to be much more effective at reducing crime.

The solution to police violence is not reform but an abolition of policing in all its forms. There are numerous alternatives to policing which will better ensure the safety of students and community members.

[Violence interruption](#) views gun violence through an epidemiological lens and prevents it with public health approaches. Baltimore's Safe Streets program has proven to be effective at reducing crime. A [2012 study](#) from Johns Hopkins showed:

- 56% reductions in killings in Cherry Hill
- 26% reduction in McElderry Park
- 34% in shootings in Ellwood Park
- Reductions across all 4 communities
- 276 conflict mediations
- Reductions spread to surrounding communities
- Norms on violence changed; people in program site were much less likely to accept the use of a gun to settle a dispute; 4 times more likely to show little or no support for gun use.

In 2019, Safe Streets mediated more than [1,800](#) conflicts, and Cherry Hill saw 395 days without homicide. Cherry Hill was one of the most successful locations because it was integrated with mental health care, having an office in the Family Health Centers of Baltimore.

An [excerpt](#) from the Baltimore Sun:

The workers go “beyond the call of duty” to help the neighborhood by constantly walking around and talking with people. He also said the workers make sure kids are addressing trauma, in hopes of stopping the cycle of violence. Safe Streets team members, as well as Reisinger and City Councilman Zeke Cohen, spent one morning this week greeting students at a local elementary school, right at the edge of the street that saw the fatal shootings, to make sure teachers and counselors were talking with the kids. “You need people you can trust and talk with,” said Aaron Hannah, a pastor and longtime Cherry Hill resident. “Homicides don’t get resolved in crowds, they get resolved with intimate conversations.”

The university has contributed \$2 million to another violence interruption program called ROCA, and it should consider expanding on this rather than creating an unwanted, undemocratic, and dangerous police presence. In addition, they could put their funds toward creating a team of mental health first responders, because police are often the first ones sent to mental health situations, when they are entirely unequipped for them. They could be putting funds towards having responders to rape victims as well, a massive problem on campus. (Not to mention, the JHU OIE has numerous [issues](#).) Even just investing in the community instead of destroying it will help reduce crime as people gain more stable livelihoods.

(vi) Lastly, A private police presence is likely to discourage students from exercising their freedom of expression, such as participating in protests.

Just two examples:

- In 2013, UCPD [trampled](#), hit, and threw students and community members at a peaceful sit-in.
- In 2011, a UC Davis officer used [pepper spray](#) on peaceful sitting student protestors.

There is much more to say, but I have limited time. In addition to the decision being undemocratic and dangerous, Johns Hopkins is not an institution that can be trusted with a police force.

Thank you for your consideration.