



*Many struggles, one mission.*

## Testimony SUPPORTING SB0276

January 19, 2021

Dear members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Abby Cocke and I am a resident of Baltimore City in District 43 and a strong supporter of SB0276. On behalf of Baltimore for Border Justice, a local advocacy and aid organization, I am submitting this testimony to urge you to SUPPORT SB0276, *Johns Hopkins University – Police Department – Repeal*.

When our communities are over-policed, it draws stark borders between who may move freely and who is targeted. A private JHU police force is not supported by students, staff, or community members in affected neighborhoods, because we know that it will expand and empower a violent system that already targets and disproportionately harms immigrants, people of color, gender and sexual minorities, the homeless, the disabled and neuro-atypical, and anyone else who doesn't fit in. In a poll filled out by more than a third of under-graduates, fully 75% were opposed. Over 100 faculty members have come out against it, and over 6,000 people from the school and surrounding neighborhoods have signed a petition in opposition. A month-long sit-in against the plan drew broad participation and formal support from the school's Student Government Association. How then can it carry forward with legitimacy?

Amongst our members and our friends, we have people who have been baselessly harassed, beaten, and arrested on their own blocks by existing Hopkins security, well outside of the Hopkins campuses and while in no way posing any disturbance or threat. We also have people who are passionately opposed because of their own knowledge of the brutality of the existing police forces in Baltimore, of the ways these forces move around like predator priests being assigned new parishes, and of the ways that JHU President Ron Daniels and his backers disdain our voices and safety already. The sit-in itself was attacked by a white supremacist teacher and Hopkins security failed to intervene, as outlined in the damning fact-finding report commissioned afterwards by the university (<https://facultyassembly.jhu.edu/files/2019/12/Homewood-Faculty-Assembly-Fact-Finding-Committee-Report.pdf>, page 29), drawing further grave concerns about the idea that Hopkins needs more security because it cares about the safety of its students and community.

For a powerful account in favor of this legislation from a very different perspective, we encourage you to read the words of Baltimore Police Department veteran Larry Smith, who lays out the case against the specific officers already involved with Hopkins security, with the process itself, and with similar models across the country and locally that have caused deaths rather than preventing them: <https://theappeal.org/johns-hopkins-universitys-private-police-force-will-bring-more-cops-to-an-overpoliced-baltimore/>

Thank you for your attention and for doing the right thing.

Sincerely,  
*Abby Cocke*

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