



January 21, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 276 (Johns Hopkins University - Police Department - Repeal)

Dear Chairman Smith and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee members,

Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC), an advocacy organization that mobilizes community members for the health, dignity, and safety of people targeted by the war on drugs and anti-sex worker policies, supports Senate Bill 276 (Johns Hopkins University - Police Department - Repeal).

We believe the Maryland Senate should act swiftly to bring this legislation to a vote and to repeal the establishment and maintenance of a Johns Hopkins University police department, including all applicable authorizations, powers, requirements, and prohibitions on the University, University police officers, the Baltimore Police Department, and the Department of Legislative Services.

We represent health care providers and professionals, including people who provide essential life-saving services in our communities. A large portion of our volunteers and supporters are justice-oriented Hopkins alum, students, staff, and or faculty. We strongly believe that a Hopkins police force will deteriorate any trusting relationship between Johns Hopkins University and Baltimore's communities. **As essential health care providers and harm reduction advocates, it is our obligation to support the repeal of the Johns Hopkins University police force.**

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this legislation, and provide the following recommendations that we believe will strengthen it.

- **Ensure that Johns Hopkins University will not be permitted to establish a police force in the future.** Incidents of police brutality against residents in cities like Baltimore, continue to occur across the nation while the efforts toward police reform and accountability have been weak and ineffective. To date, Johns Hopkins has shown no meaningful acknowledgement of the petition from over 6,000 Baltimore city residents, University faculty and students, against the police force. Until the Johns Hopkins University Administration has been held accountable to the steps it has taken to form a private armed police force, it is critical to ensure that once its established police force has been repealed, the University will be prohibited from establishing a similar police force or department or granting certain police powers to certain employees in the future.



- **Expand the scope of the bill to include private institutions of higher education across the state.** Delegate Ivey has introduced legislation, HB0336, which would repeal the Hopkins Police and the Police Forces of Other Private Institutions of Higher Education, to ensure that private colleges and universities across the state will be prohibited from establishing or maintaining a private police force. Like in Baltimore city, Black and Brown residents, staff, and students across the state should feel safe and remain shielded from an unwarranted - or deadly - encounter with the police, whether they reside on campus or in the communities surrounding a university or college campus.

BHRC respectfully requests the Committee give this measure a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information about BHRC or this position, please contact Rajani Gudlavalleti at Rajani@BaltimoreHarmReduction.org.