

Representatives and Senators of the Maryland General Assembly,

My name is CJ Sindler, and I am a life-long resident of Baltimore City, Maryland, and I currently reside in Maryland's 40th legislative district. My home is located in the neighborhood of Hampden, and I frequently drive through the adjacent campus of Johns Hopkins and the surrounding neighborhoods. I notice the dozens of fluorescent windbreakers of Johns Hopkins security patrolling the streets; the flashing lights of their campus police patrol cars making rounds. And I do not feel safer because of them. Rather I feel fear for my fellow citizens of Baltimore.

I fear for the citizens of neighborhoods just beyond the "protection" of the Hopkins' private police, because it is those citizens this police force has been specifically created to stand against. Why else then would a private police force be necessary, other than to carry out a specific agenda focused on the desires of a private entity? Despite Johns Hopkins' claims that the police force was created to protect, Hopkins has already shown what happens to neighborhoods adjacent to their protection bubbles. Just look at what happened to the community of Middle East that borders Hopkins' East Baltimore Campus. Black and brown citizens were pushed out using eminent domain and city-backed redevelopment campaigns after the neighborhoods were deemed "blighted". Increased police presence under private control will give Johns Hopkins the tools it needs to inflate crime statistics in nearby areas. Later these numbers will be used to fuel Hopkins specific vision of what a redeveloped Baltimore would look like.

To put it simply, the fact that a large institutional entity like Johns Hopkins has been given the authority to have its own private police force sets a very dangerous precedent, because it adds directed intent to policing. Furthermore, it opens the door to other powerful institutions and corporations to do the same. Who will create the next private police force to push their agenda on the citizens of Baltimore? A private Under Armor police pushing the Port Covington redevelopment plan in South Baltimore? Or maybe it will be an Amazon police force carrying out Jeff Bezos' plans in Dundalk? Putting the enforcement of public law into private hands sets up a very slippery slope that affects the lives of citizens already targeted unfairly by ordinary law enforcement.

And to drive home my point, I think lawmakers such as yourselves already understand the stressed nature of the relationship between the citizens of Baltimore and the Baltimore Police Department. How then is adding more police to the mixture supposed to help the situation? All it will do is add more incidents of minorities being unfairly targeted and killed by law enforcement. Make the right call and repeal the authority of Hopkins to have a private police force and stop this trend before it gets out of control.

CJ Sindler
Social Studies Teacher, Dundalk High School