

My name is Ren DeBrosse and I am a first year medical student at Johns Hopkins University. I am also a resident of District 46 and I worked for a Johns Hopkins affiliate on the East Baltimore medical campus for two years prior to matriculating in the School of Medicine. I love this city so much that I decided to spend at least six years of my life here for my scientific and medical training. My relationship with the Middle East community has also grown in that time, as I have done service work with that community and consider them family. It is for these reasons I must speak out against the formation of the Hopkins private police and in support of SB0276.

The deployment of private police in the Middle East neighborhood and Charles village targets an area that already has strong Hopkins security presence. Racism within the Hopkins security force has been reported to the Office of Inclusion and Diversity as of summer of 2020 but has not addressed. If there is already a lack of accountability within the security team, we lack evidence to support that a police force would be held accountable, either.

The track record for additional police force as a means to reduce crime is not convincing and is also tied to the death of countless Black people across the country. Six years of reform efforts implemented in the wake of the 2014 police killings of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, and others did not save Freddie Gray, or Alton Sterling, or Korryn Gaines, or Walter Scott, or Breonna Taylor, or George Floyd. To follow the track record of university policing, one needs only look as far as the tragic and preventable death of Tyrone West, whose life was taken seven years ago by a Morgan State officer. We see the harm that University policing promises and community members, both residents and employees, should not have to live in fear of an additional private police presence.

The money that would be spent on the private police force could be more effective at promoting safety in Baltimore by putting it in the hands of community organizations. Middle East community organizations have repeatedly and continue to ask for university funds to come directly to them so that they may make autonomous decisions about their neighborhoods. Instead of embarking on new projects like JHUPD, JHU should implement what they have already committed to and neglected to see through in the past: the Minority Inclusion Agreement, which in 2002 promised 8,000 new jobs and a community reinvestment fund in East Baltimore. As of 2019, JHU has created about 1,500 new jobs— 20% of what they promised. JHU has not brought their promises to bring community aid to fruition and instead focuses its efforts on a police force that the has elicited a large dissenting voice:

The institution of this private police force does not take into account or acknowledge the over 6,152 community members stated our opposition to the police force in [this petition](#), which has still not been acknowledged by Hopkins administration. How can we expect the accountability of any future JHUPD if its administration will not even take accountability to deeply listen to, or acknowledge, community members who oppose the formation of the force? Johns Hopkins's actions, which have excluded dissenting voices, including the voices of those who would be most affected by JHUPD, do not bode well for an accountable police force.

I hope for the sake of myself, my neighbors, my coworkers, and the patients that I am beginning to care for that this bill repealing the Johns Hopkins University Police Department will pass. I look forward to following this legislation and continuing discussions about what practices are best for the safety of all community members.