

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

My name is Stephanie Saxton and I am a PhD student at Johns Hopkins University and constituent of Maryland's 43rd district. I also attended Johns Hopkins as an undergraduate and have a unique vantage point having spent so much time on this campus. While the university claims to need a police force to protect someone like me, the majority of students and my colleagues agree: a private police force would make the university more dangerous, not less¹. As a queer student, I worry about myself and my friends who would face especially violent police response—like in the case of Scout Shultz, a transgender student who was shot and killed by Georgia Tech police. As a white student, I must speak out against the suggestion that Black peers and Baltimore city residents are a danger to me. Any undergraduate, particularly women undergraduates, will tell you that we were not warned about especially dangerous neighborhoods, but especially dangerous fraternities. The data shows, the greatest threat to undergraduates are their own peers.² However, gender violence is not an issue that will be solved by private police force but exacerbated by it. Universities with their own police forces have not prevented harms between students but profiled their Black neighbors. A police force beholden to the interests of a predominantly white and wealthy institution will exercise very predictable violence against a predominantly Black and working-class city. I ask that the members of the assembly pass SB0276 in order to repeal a bill that will most certainly cause harm to Baltimore. The police force is not yet established, and it is not too late to act.

Thank you,

Stephanie Saxton
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¹ According to democratic votes held in the Graduate Representative Organization, Teachers and Researchers United and undergraduate student government referendum. All of which are more comprehensive surveys of student opinion than anything the university will present to you.

² The overwhelming majority of crimes at JHU—by an astronomical longshot—are sexual assault and harassment.