

TESTIMONY SUPPORTING SB 0276
Senate Judiciary Proceeding
Quinn Lester, PhD Candidate, Johns Hopkins Krieger School of Arts and Sciences
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My name is Quinn Lester. I am a PhD student at the Johns Hopkins Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, a Baltimore City resident in Charles Village, and a registered voter in Maryland's 43rd district. **I am testifying today to urge the committee to support SB 0276: the Johns Hopkins Private Police Force should be repealed.**

In my dissertation I research the relationship between policing and democracy, so I first want to ask, does greater police presence increase safety, as Johns Hopkins wants to claim? There is little scholarly consensus that more police equals an increase in safety. In the vast majority of cases police are not present for when a crime occurs, and most of the time they do not solve the crime after the fact. There is little reason to believe a Hopkins police force would be different. Police presence is mainly used to maintain social order, which often focuses on minor, quality-of-life crimes that do not harm individuals but offend the sensibilities of community leaders or property developers, such as Johns Hopkins.

A greater police presence in the communities around Hopkins property would have a marked increase in danger for students of color and non-Hopkins community members, who would be actively surveilled, targeted, and arrested based on police profiling that they do not belong at Hopkins or are already criminals. In fact, the presence of more police could immediately lead to an increase in the crime rate, as a police presence leads to arrests for activities that previously were not seen as criminal by the community, such as drinking and disruptions of public order by college students.

Furthermore, the Police Accountability Board set up by Hopkins to oversee itself is already a joke. Johns Hopkins was able to pick its own people for the board, the board does not meet in public, and no meeting notes have yet to be published from it. The initial opposition to a Hopkins private police force argued that, as a private entity, Hopkins would have even less oversight than the Baltimore Police Department and those warnings are still prescient.

Finally, two years ago Hopkins rushed its private police force bill through the General Assembly on the basis of needing to address an urgent crime wave around the Hopkins Medical Campus. However, once the bill passed there has been nary a word about actually establishing a police force while crime itself has gone down. I can only believe then that crime was never the real reason for this drive towards a wholly novel in Maryland police force. Legislators need to take a step back now and re-examine Hopkins claims about its police force, what its purpose was for, and how Hopkins lied to them and the public from the start.

For all these reasons, I support SB 0276.