

My name is Dre Cortes, and I am a Latinx Transgender individual in the Charles Village community who has suffered physical and emotional harm at the hands of a violent and unhinged Baltimore City Sheriff who was working secondary employment for Johns Hopkins University Police Department. It is out of my own harrowing experience that I sincerely urge you to support SB0276- Johns Hopkins University Police Department Repeal because it is the only means by which to restore justice and fairness to our East Baltimore communities.

I am living proof that the mere existence of the violent system that is the JHU Police Department is extremely dangerous for our community. I have routinely witnessed JHU Police Officers harassing Black and Brown people in our community and unreasonably and unlawfully questioning their motives and movements. In August of 2019, I approached Baltimore City Deputy Sheriff Richard Watts who was assigned to the corner of 27<sup>th</sup> and Guilford Avenue as a JHU officer. Deputy Watts was harassing a black man as he was merely walking up the street. When I confronted Deputy Watts about his misconduct, he began to aggressively argue with me and ultimately he falsely accused me of assaulting him by allegedly "touching his arm" (I am 5'1 and 125 lbs, whereas he is over 6 feet tall and weighs over 300 lbs). The officer then violently took me to the ground and pinned me to the cement. I had bruises, cuts, and abrasions all over me. His attack put me in in the ER, where he then handcuffed me to a bed and sat in the hospital room next to me in a grimacing manner for 8+ hours. He then hauled me off to Central Booking where I was wrongfully detained for over 16 hours. Why? Simply because I witnessed him harassing a Black man who was only passing by, and when I used my camera to bear witness to the interaction, the officer became agitated and aggressive and violated my right to simple human decency by violently attacking me. It is important to note that the bogus criminal charges filed by Deputy Watts against me were summarily dismissed in court.

I have lived in my neighborhood for almost 6 years now, at address 2717 Guilford Ave, Baltimore, MD 21218- District 12. I am proud to be a member of this community and to be a leader in this community who is connected to the pulse and the people in our community. I am intentional about caring for my community by volunteering my time and effort with organizations and neighbors alike in an effort to improve life for everyone here. Before this incident, I had never been arrested in my life, and I never have since. I had also never before in my life felt the sense of fear and danger I felt that night when I survived this heinous act of brutality at the hands of the John Hopkins Police Force. I can only thank God that I did not suffer the same tragic fate as Tyrone West, who was killed at the hands of a Morgan State University Police Officer.

I know the serious challenges that our neighborhoods in Baltimore face. But deploying a culturally insensitive, overly aggressive, and wholly unnecessary police presence in our neighborhoods is absolutely not the right answer. In fact, it is a major problem because I am unfortunately not alone. I know several others who

have suffered at the hands of JHU's Police Force. I also know I am not alone in supporting the repeal. In a poll of more than 1/3 of JHU under-graduates, 75% were opposed to the JHU Police presence. Over 100 JHU faculty members have spoken out in opposition of the force, and over 6,000 people from the JHU community and surrounding neighborhoods have signed a petition in protest.

More importantly, all of the data available regarding this type of University policing model shows that police forces like JHU's are wholly detrimental to the surrounding communities; they hurt exponentially more than they help. Let's compel JHU to use the massive amount of money needed for its police force to actually invest in the lifeblood of our communities: to create the jobs it promised, to infuse resources into the community as it promised. We must compel JHU, as Dr. King said of America, to make good on the "Bad Check" it has written to East Baltimore, not encourage the institution to add to the harmful effects of the white supremacist system of criminal justice.

Thank you for your time. We need SB0276 passed this legislative session.

Please stand up strong for the people and remove JHU Police Department.