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The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 101
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Opposition to HB 336 Private Institutions of Higher Education – Police Departments –
Repeal and Prohibition

Dear Honorable Clippinger:

I am writing to oppose HB 336 cited above. I have been a resident of Baltimore City since 1978 and a resident of Charles Village, in Maryland's 43rd Legislative District, since 1981. I was elected the first Quadrant #3 rep for the newly formed Charles Village Community Benefits District, a management authority, (CVCBD) in 1995, have served on the Boards of both the CVCBD (1995-2004 and 2020-present), the Charles Village Civic Association, Inc. (CVCA) (2000-2015) and have served as Chair of the CVCBD's Safety Advisory Council, which I now attend once a month. I have led and participated in the CVCA's Neighborhood Walkers, Light Up the Night, and National Night Out vs. Crime programs since 2000. I currently attend the bi-monthly Baltimore City Police Department's (BCPD) Northern District Community Relations Council meetings as a representative of the CVCA.

The current law, Chapter 25 of 2019, is a good law passed after much debate and amendment. It incorporates all the reasonable concerns voiced by the Charles Village residents prior to its passing. Under the current law, JHU's authorization to establish a police department:

1. Is subject to the Maryland Public Information Act
2. Is based on an MOU entered between the university and the BCPD, after public posting and opportunity for public review and comment, which requires BCPD to have primary responsibility for all investigations and arrests related to Part I offenses, to maintain any evidence collected from crime scenes, and to impound any stolen vehicles,
3. limits JHU's jurisdiction to its Campus and areas adjacent, to be specified after input from the relevant adjacent community members,
4. requires JHU to adopt specific standards for hiring, education, human relations, public relations, to maintain constitutional and community-oriented policing, to limit the number of officers, and to require its police officers to use body-worn cameras,
5. requires the establishment of an Accountability Board where community members can voice its concerns and recommendations regarding the operations of the JHU police department directly to leadership, and
6. requires the establishment of a Police Athletic/Activity League in Baltimore City, the hosting of job events each year in Baltimore City, and the annual reporting of the JHU police department operations and functions to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore City.

These requirements would result in a community oriented, highly trained university police department that would be small, transparent, and publicly accountable.

I have studied strategies involving crime prevention and deterrence as it relates to the Charles Village Community for more than 25 years. I have reached out to my neighbors, some of whom have been victims of crime themselves. I have walked the Charles Village streets with BCPD officers, JHU security officers and residents, many of whom are JHU students, working together to build a community partnership that educates residents and deters crime. I understand thoroughly and directly the connection between crime prevention and deterrence.

I also understand that BCPD manpower shortages have negatively impacted the Charles Village neighborhood surrounding JHU. Because of the BCPD manpower shortages since 2015 and the need for officers to patrol more heavily impacted crime corridors such as Greenmount Avenue, street crimes such as assaults and robberies are occurring at a higher rate in Charles Village with most of the culprits escaping arrest. Many of the crime victims are JHU students walking from Campus to their residences in adjacent Charles Village. We have come to rely more and more on the presence of JHU Security Officers to help us deter crime. A JHU Police Department would better enable the Charles Village community to apprehend suspects alleged of committing street crimes. Improving the chance of apprehension would act as a deterrent for the commission of street crimes. Improving public safety by lowering incidents of street crime is a goal we hope to reach with the establishment of the JHU Police Department.

For the reasons stated above, I respectfully oppose House Bill 336 currently under consideration and hope that the House Judiciary Committee will vote against its proceeding to the House floor.

Thank you for your time and attention to this testimony.

Sincerely,

Sharon L. Guida

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