

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB 0336

Private Institutions of Higher Education - Police Departments - Repeal and Prohibition

To: Chairman Luke Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Concerned members of the Johns Hopkins University Department of Neuroscience

Date: February 10th, 2021

We are concerned members of the faculty, students, postdoctoral fellows, and staff in the Solomon Snyder Department of Neuroscience at Johns Hopkins University, writing to **support HB 0336**, which would repeal provisions legalizing the formation of a Johns Hopkins Police Department (JHPD). We are writing in our personal capacities as employees and students who work and study on the East Baltimore and Homewood campuses of Johns Hopkins, and as constituents the JHPD is ostensibly designed to serve.

We oppose this police force because we fear for the safety of members of our department, our university, and the surrounding Baltimore community. Ample evidence shows that there are racial disparities in policing,¹ and that minorities - Black individuals in particular - are more likely to be subject to deadly police violence.² Our labs at Johns Hopkins are situated in or adjacent to neighborhoods where a majority of families are experiencing poverty, most residents are Black, and incarceration rates are already disproportionately high.³ We oppose any measure that will jeopardize the safety of Black and brown people on or near our campuses by increasing their interactions with police. We are also concerned that deadly police encounters disproportionately impact individuals with severe mental illness.⁴

We believe that a JHPD sets a dangerous precedent for the privatization of policing. Events of the past year have made it painfully clear that police must be accountable to the public, and we reject the notion that any private university - even our own - is well-positioned to be a policing entity. Data released from the University of Chicago Police Department (UCPD), identified as a model for the JHPD, support allegations that UCPD engages in racial profiling.⁵ Tyrone West was murdered by a Morgan State police officer in 2013.⁶ He is one of many victims of excessive use of force by university police forces,⁷⁻¹³ and we fear for the lives of our own employees and neighbors.

The Johns Hopkins University administration has not been responsive to the concerns of university members regarding the formation of a JHPD. 6,152 faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members signed a faculty-led petition in 2020 stating our opposition to the formation of a JHPD.¹⁴ This is the latest in a long line of petitions and surveys showing overwhelming opposition in the past two years.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ University members have also suggested numerous alternative measures that do make us feel more safe, such as an expansion of the Hopkins SafeRide program that was curtailed in 2019 due to funding limitations, but our concerns and suggestions have not been acknowledged. The Johns Hopkins University administration has shown that it will not be accountable to its own employees and students on the issue of policing, and even less accountable to the residents of Baltimore City and the State of Maryland. We therefore look to you, our elected representatives, to protect the safety of our community.

Out of concern for our safety, and in particular, the safety of our Black and brown community members and neighbors, we urge you to vote in favor of **HB 0336**.

Signed,

Faculty:

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Charles Connor, District 7
Gul Dolen, District 45
Sascha du Lac, District 3
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Alex L. Kolodkin, District 43
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Ravikrishnan Jayakumar, District 43
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Matthew Lewis, District 43
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Thomas Burnett, District 43
Cody Call, District 43
Matilde Castro, District 43
Sheridan Cavalier, District 41
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Abel Corver, District 43
Raina Daleo, District 43
Mingyuan Dong, District 43
Jacob Elsey, District 43
Taylor Evans, District 40
Gabrielle Ewall, District 46
Jenna Glatzer, District 45
Cooper Grossman, District 46
Emily Han, District 46
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Michael Hopkins, District 45
Hsin-Yi Hung, District 40
Consuelo Jimenez-Ornelas, District 40
Sarah Kruessel, District 46
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Simon Locke
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Gian C. Molina-Castro, District 40
Charles Morgan, District 46
Erik Nelson, District 46
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