

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0336

I am submitting this testimony to urge you to SUPPORT HB0336 because wealthy and unaccountable private institutions like Johns Hopkins (JH) should not be allowed to have their own armed police forces with arrest powers and protection under LEOBR.

The resistance to the JH private police force has been overwhelming since it was first proposed in March 2018. Over 100 faculty members have penned a letter opposing it. At the height of the protest against the police department, community members staged a 35-day sit-in in which hundreds of students participated on a rolling basis, according to Homewood Faculty Assembly's Fact Finding Committee [report](#). The school's own Student Government Assembly voted to formally support the sit-in. A referendum in which over a third of undergraduate students participated found that over 70% were opposed. Following the uprisings against police brutality throughout this summer, Johns Hopkins announced that they would be delaying the police force by two years. After that announcement a new petition garnered over 6,000 signatures from community members and neighboring organizations calling for JH to abandon the police force altogether.

Baltimore is already heavily over-policed by a corrupt and unaccountable police department that regularly terrorizes our communities. Recently the ACLU released a [report](#) on police violence and complaints of misconduct that found that there were 13,392 complaints of misconduct filed against 1,826 BPD officers and 22,884 use of force incidents from 2015-2019. The last thing we need is another police department, let alone one formed by a private institution like Johns Hopkins, which would hire from BPD as it has already done in the past. Several former BPD officers are now officers with JH Campus Safety & Security. The former VP for Security, Melissa Hyatt, was a BPD veteran for over 20 years. She was a sergeant of a specialized crime unit with a history of serious misconduct allegations, and a commanding officer during the period of the Gun Trace Task Force scandal. Jarron Jackson, Hopkins' Senior Director of Campus Security spent several years as a BPD sergeant, lieutenant, and captain before joining Hopkins.

There has already been several issues with racial profiling in JH's security department that they should focus on before trying to create an armed private police force. The Garland Sit-in group has recently submitted evidence to the university of violent, white supremacist beliefs espoused by two JH security officers which they made known through their public Facebook profiles. The JH Office of Institutional Equity has not taken any transparent action regarding this. Their only response has been saying they could not disclose "personnel matters."

When white supremacists attacked the sit-in, JH security did nothing to prevent the attack and their Office of Institutional Equity did nothing over the course of a year to hold a JH security officer that attacked a student accountable (here is a [video](#) of the incident). You can read more about the failure of JH security in the damning fact-finding report linked earlier (page 29). JH has already shown that they are incapable of addressing students' grievances.

JH has a fraught relationship with the Middle East community as well. Over the years, JH has made many promises to the Middle East area around the medical campus, including the Minority Inclusion Agreement, which in 2002 promised 8,000 new jobs and a community reinvestment fund in East Baltimore. As of 2019, JH has created about 1,500 new jobs—20% of what they promised. Instead, JH broke their promises while still forcibly removing 742 families from their homes. Instead of investing in more police, JH should invest in communities and proven public health based strategies for reducing crime, like their own School of Public Health's experts advise.

Other universities' police departments have caused irreparable harm to surrounding communities. For example, one of the officers who killed Tyrone West in 2013 was a Morgan State University officer, and there has yet to be any accountability for his murder. Likewise, Scout Shultz, a transgender student, was killed by Georgia Tech University police in 2017 while experiencing a mental health crisis. Another case is the 2015 killing of Sam DuBose by a University of Cincinnati officer. Again there was no accountability; instead, the University awarded him a settlement of nearly \$350,000. There are countless other instances where police terror occurred at the hands of university police forces. Research and history show that reform is ineffectual. We've had six years of reform efforts implemented in the wake of the 2014 killings of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, and way too many others. Yet, all of that reform didn't save Freddie Gray, or Alton Sterling, or Korryn Gaines, or Walter Scott, or Breonna Taylor, or George Floyd.

All the evidence shows that police forces beholden to wealthy private institutions will bring harm to predominantly Black and working-class communities and would disproportionately harm immigrants, people of color, gender and sexual minorities, the homeless, the disabled, and other marginalized groups. For these reasons, we urge you to do the right thing and support this bill.