

Dear Delegate Ivey,

I am writing to you in support of HB0336, to repeal Hopkins' private police.

I am a fourth-year graduate student at Johns Hopkins University. In June 2020, I signed a letter with over six-thousand other community members, addressed to President Ronald Daniels and the Board of Trustees, demanding the abandonment of the formation of an armed private police force. The President has not once replied to, addressed, or publicly acknowledged this letter once, and this incident is not even the first of its kind. In fact, this letter came twenty-one months after an initial petition of almost two-thousand community members that was similarly ignored. JHU appears committed to the creation of a private police even after the death of Tyrone West a few years ago, who was killed nearby by a Morgan State University officer.

To put the number six-thousand in perspective: JHU has a little over six-thousand undergraduate students currently enrolled. And a letter signed by a combination of alumni, students, graduate students, faculty, and nearby residents was not mentioned even once in an email addressed to us or on their website.

I am not sure if I am supposed to provide direct links, but this is the link to the letter with six-thousand signatures (again, it has more supporters than the entire undergraduate population of the university!):

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13twmkewdH7IFe1Xd7Z1pwy7hCRxSKSYJ/view>

The lack of any direct response to these multiple letters demonstrates a refusal to communicate with and a lack of respect for the entire city of Baltimore. University leaders have maintained in public announcements that the creation of a private police is necessary to improve campus safety. In doing so, and in ignoring these letters, they have made it clear this private police force is something simply to be advertised, and that they have no interest in communicating with the local community if it involves responding to criticism in any manner. This is foretelling of the complete lack of accountability the university and any private institution will display should private police forces be allowed. If Johns Hopkins cannot directly respond to a peaceful letter signed by thousands of its own students, faculty, and community members, what reason do we have to believe any university will hold themselves accountable to an inevitable killing by their armed police force?

Last June, at the onset of the Black Lives Matter protests that swept the nation, the university announced the postponement of the private police force.

Despite this, some of my fellow grad students have actually witnessed Hopkins police units patrolling the university against their own promise to their own students.

I am fully aware of the senate bill SB0276 in progress to determine if Johns Hopkins, specifically, should be allowed to create a private police force. I do not see a reason why this should be allowed for any university. Johns Hopkins' and Morgan State' history in this matter should speak for the entire city.

My university has invested a large amount of money lobbying to allow a private police force against our will, and they have paved the way for other universities. Students and faculty have spent years demanding change to a president and board of trustees that cannot respond to criticism, and we are worried of other universities following their footsteps in the future now faculty and students have failed to prevent Johns Hopkins. After years of peaceful protest, there are no routes left to express our voices, and many of us see this bill as the last opportunity to oppose the creation of a private police.

Sincerely,

Sean Hare