

I write to you in support of HB336 and HB1284.

The bill granting Johns Hopkins the authority to establish a private police force has an unfortunate history with nine senior Hopkins officials **contributing \$16,000** on a single day to then-Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh's campaign account to help push it through. It further benefited from **\$581,000** in total lobbying costs to get passed.

Johns Hopkins authority to establish a private police force should be revoked completely because of its potential to further racialized trauma, its potential to further alienate university-community relations and its links to gentrification.

Racialized trauma is inherent to modern-day American policing, an institution that has historical roots in slave patrols. Police killings take the lives of 1 in every 1,000 Black men. While some contend that University campus police are trained differently, the evidence suggests otherwise. While a lack of accountability and transparency make it difficult to obtain precise numbers, a growing number of people across the country have been killed or injured by university police. This is true of Maryland as well. In July 2013 Morgan State University officers were involved in the death of Tyrone West, an unarmed Black man. In June 2015 there was a fatal shooting by a University of Maryland-Baltimore officer, another fatal shooting by a Coppin State University officer in December 2016, and, most recently, a nonfatal shooting by a Morgan State University officer in January 2018. Given the especially tenuous historical relationship between Johns Hopkins and surrounding neighborhoods, the introduction of a police force will serve to further erode community trust.

From the theft of Henrietta Lacks' cells, to the Baltimore Lead Paint Study that exposed Black children in East Baltimore to lead, Johns Hopkins University and Hospital have forged a strained relationship with surrounding communities. Multiple neighborhood associations near the Hopkins Homewood campus — the Abell Improvement Association, the Greater Remington Improvement Association, and the Harwood Community Association voted near unanimously to oppose the police force. The East Baltimore campus, where Hopkins police would initially patrol, has also seen organized resistance by surrounding neighborhoods like Douglass Homes. Pushing past organized, strident, and persistent community resistance against the police force will only further alienate those living around Hopkins' campus.

#### Police and Gentrification

Finally, Hopkins' police force represents a larger, multi-pronged strategy to gentrify and racially homogenize its greater campus area. The strategy has long been underway as evidenced by the Hopkins-led East Baltimore Development Initiative, which displaced about 740 families from the medical campus area and failed to deliver a community reinvestment fund promised to residents in 2002. The role of policing in such a context of rapid demographic shifts is affirmed by studies demonstrating the key role of policing in the early stages of gentrification. Between the first police bill in 2018 and now, the median home price in the area has risen more than 40-fold. Further, Johns Hopkins Hospital has filed over 2,400 medical debt lawsuits since 2009, targeting Black working-class patients living in adjacent neighborhoods, controlling the race and class

composition of nearby communities. Finally, even recently proposed alternatives to policing -- the \$6 million JHU Innovation Fund for Community Safety -- are, not coincidentally, limited to neighborhoods immediately around Johns Hopkins -- Mount Vernon, Charles Village, and East Baltimore. This fund is also limited to community organizations that partner with Hopkins affiliates and requires that these affiliates receive at least 10% of the grant. This practice excludes important autonomous groups in nearby communities, such as the Baltimore Redevelopment Action Coalition for Empowerment (BRACE), and others.

*Note: This testimony was adapted from an op-ed authored by myself, Donald Gresham and Ike Enemoh*