

Support for JHU Police Repeal Bills **HB336/HB1284**

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Writing in Support of HB336/HB1284

I am writing to support the repeal of the Johns Hopkins University police department. As a faculty member and resident of the area surrounding the Homewood campus, I have no interest in an increased armed police presence at my place of work or residence. For my own safety, for that of my colleagues, for that of my students, for that of my neighbors, I object to the university creating and controlling its own police force.

When the bill to authorize the police force was first before the state legislature, a number of my students were central to the efforts to halt its approval. Drawing on their own experiences with the adverse impacts of over policing, what they had learned in coursework about the inequities that policing enshrines, and the broader community's objection to the bill, these students forced the process to slow down. In the following year, when, despite widespread objections to the policing bill by members of all constituencies connected to the university, the administration and the legislature went forward with the new measure, my students were vocal in their opposition. A number were part of the Garland Hall sit in that tried to stop it. A police helicopter hovering over my house woke me up and I rushed to campus to watch as an overwhelming number of police in full tactical gear forcibly removed peacefully protesting students and community members from the building. This action only reinforced how the move for a private police force represents an escalation of the kinds of tactics and rhetoric that broader moves for reform in our country are trying to combat.

A new armed police department is antithetical to the work that the legislature and the people of Maryland are trying to undertake to rethink policing and improve the well-being and safety of all of our communities. Furthermore, as there has been no significant implementation of the bill because of ongoing opposition, the legislature has an excellent opportunity to reverse course: you can rectify a major setback when it comes to improving trust between JHU and its black neighbors and a continuing source of controversy in the city.

To reiterate, I am writing to encourage the committee to support HB336/HB1284.