

Re: Support for JHU Police Repeal Bills HB336/HB1284

Dear Committee:

I am writing in support of HB0336/HB1284 which would repeal authorization for the JHU Police Department.

I am acutely aware of and sensitive to the safety issues in Baltimore City because I live here with my family. I chose to move to Butchers Hill because of its proximity to the Johns Hopkins East Baltimore Medical Campus where I am a member of the faculty. We moved here so that I could walk to work. Now, my 2-year-old daughter attends the Weinberg Early Childhood Education Center on North Chester Street, just a few blocks east of my office. I frequently walk to and from work and my husband and I walk to and from our house on East Pratt Street to pick up my daughter at school. We look forward to also picking up our infant son at school in a few short years.

I opposed the Hopkins police force the first time around, but am mystified that anyone can continue to support an armed Hopkins police force in light of last summer's events. The ongoing, video-captured murders of innocent Black men and women have uncorked a ferocious and essential reckoning with the obvious, horrifying violence that grossly fells Black men and women in this country. I am dismayed that members of our delegation, representatives, Luke Clippinger and Brooke Lierman and Senate President Bill Ferguson, seem to continue their support this legislation even after issuing statements that indicate their apparent alignment with a legislative agenda that might otherwise address the pressing needs to protect Black men, women and children. Even Hopkins appears to be reconsidering their proposal, having paused implementation for two years.

This is not a problem that can be swept under the table with a two year pause. The time to end the prospects for an armed Hopkins police force is before someone gets killed.

In my work at Hopkins, I care for a predominantly African American population of young people with sickle cell disease. I worry for them every day, even without an armed private police force. My patients travel to Hopkins for care. I am alarmed by the possibility that they might meet an armed police officer and that such an encounter might end, as we have seen encounters like this end all over the country -- in Baltimore, Minneapolis, Staten Island, Ferguson, Louisville, Oakland and many other places. Why enable more opportunities for state sanctioned violence that will (for it always does) disproportionately endanger the Black and Brown citizens of Baltimore?

We want all citizens of Baltimore, be they Hopkins affiliates or not, to be safe in our neighborhoods. We do not want private police who are unaccountable to the public in our community. We do not want more guns in our community. We need creative solutions to solve the seemingly intractable safety concerns in this city. Instead of spending resources for to outfit, insure and defend the actions of an armed police force, I want investment in non-violent solutions to the City's problems. Creative solutions are needed and happily, some of the

resources to develop such solutions are at our doorstep. The Hopkins School of Public Health is the mightiest in the world. Hopkins' leadership should harness the wisdom, skills and expertise of that School to plan for creative programs that enhance safety for everyone. This will require that the leadership work harder, more thoughtfully and more sustainably to build durable, authentic partnerships with neighboring communities.

The Hopkins police force offers a false promise of safety to the privileged few at the expense of the many. We know better as a society, and I believe you also know better as a member of this society, than to imagine that an armed private police force will make us safer. The proposed force is undemocratic, it is threatening and it should not be allowed to move forward now or in the future.

Please support HB336/HB1284.

Sincerely,

Lydia H. Pecker, MD
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