

Written Testimony in Support of HB1284

February 19, 2021

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Rachel Strodel and I am a second-year medical student at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and resident of the 46th district. I'm writing to express my complete and enthusiastic support for HB1284, a bill to repeal the Johns Hopkins private police authority, and to demand you do everything in your power to ensure it passes.

As an undergraduate, I attended Yale University, where I saw first-hand how violent and unsafe private police forces are. During my freshman year, in Jan 2015, Tahj Blow of the class of 2016 was [approached by a Yale police officer with his gun drawn](#) and ordered to the ground. After Blow was released, a suspect was arrested. The university and the police acknowledged that “the student who was detained endured a deeply troubling experience,” yet an internal investigation by the university did not find that the officer did anything wrong.

A year after I graduated, while investigating a robbery off Yale's campus, Hamden and Yale police officers fired [16 shots at Paul Witherspoon and Stephanie Washington](#), two unarmed Black community members, for “exit[ing] the vehicle in an abrupt manner.” New Haven PD officers were also present. The Hamden PD officer was arrested on one felony charge and two misdemeanor charges; the Yale police officer was not charged.

Hopkins often points out that its peer institutions—such as Yale—have private police forces, so why shouldn't they? In just four years, the Yale Police gave me plenty of examples for why private police are a dangerous idea—especially in Baltimore, one of the most over-policed cities in the country. Do I need to remind you that in our own state Tyrone West was choked to death by a Morgan State University Police Officer just 8 years ago?

The House voted 94-42 to pass the original bill allowing the JHU private police. For those in office at the time: did the [\\$581,000](#) Hopkins paid in 2019 to lobby during that session cloud your moral compass? If so, you have a second chance now to redeem yourselves and listen to your constituents, including the [6,000+ students, faculty, staff, and residents](#) who have been speaking out against this bill. I'm tired of hearing survivors of police violence re-capitulate their trauma over and over and over again during legislative hearings to get bills like this passed. Do something, or else you will have blood on your hands from the future victims of violence at the hands of the Hopkins police.

We will not forget your record on this issue when the next time to vote comes around.

Thank you for your time,

Rachel Strodel

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