

## **Testimony in Favor of SB0336**

February 10, 2021

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

Our names are Donald Gresham, Theresa Hopkins, and Edward Williams, and we write to you today as concerned community leaders and residents of the 45th District. We ask you to issue favorable support HB0336, a bill that would repeal the provisions allowing Johns Hopkins University to create a private police force and would prohibit a private institution of higher education from establishing a police department or granting employees the powers of a peace or police officer.

Johns Hopkins does not have a track record of being good neighbors to residents of the 45th district, and the bill allowing Hopkins to create a private police force allows that behavior continue. Hopkins has made many broken promises to the Middle East area around the medical campus, including the Minority Inclusion Agreement, which in 2002 promised 8,000 new jobs and a community reinvestment fund in East Baltimore. As of 2019, JHU has created about 1,500 new jobs—20% of what they promised. Instead, Hopkins broke their promises while still forcibly removing over 700 families from their homes.

How can we trust that Hopkins will keep their promise to create an accountable police force when they continuously break their promises to the communities they occupy? Hopkins has disbanded the accountability board that is supposed to “directly shape the development and operation of the future Johns Hopkins Police Department (JHPD).” They say this is because of the two-year pause in creating the private police force, but it also cuts off communities from giving feedback on the University’s plans. It tells us that Hopkins is only interested in feedback when it agrees with their already-existing plans.

In addition, over 6,152 Hopkins students, faculty, and community members stated our opposition to the police force in this petition which has still not been acknowledged by Hopkins administration. How can we expect the accountability of any future JHUPD if its administration will not even take accountability to deeply listen to, or acknowledge, community members who oppose the formation of the force? Johns Hopkins’s actions, which have excluded dissenting voices, including the voices of those who would be most affected by JHUPD, do not bode well for an accountable police force.

In Maryland and across the country, private police forces have proven to be deadly. In our own state, Tyrone West was choked to death by a Morgan State police officer in 2013. Do we have to wait for more lives to be lost to the Hopkins Private Police? Repeal the authority for Hopkins to create a private police.

Sincerely,

**Donald Gresham**

*President of Baltimore Redevelopment Action Coalition for Empowerment*

**Edward Williams**

**Theresa Hopkins**