

I am testifying in favor of HB0336-Repeal of the JHU Private Police Department.

As a longtime resident of Baltimore City, Johns Hopkins has established a reputation of both being one of the larger anchor institutions and have a history of racism and overstepping boundaries in relation to the residents living here-from enrollment to eminent domain that displaced too many residents on the East Side of Baltimore. Having their own armed Private Police Department is by far the biggest overstepping of boundaries in a city wrought with systematic violence that also plays a part in the intra-community violence that has been pervasive for some years now. In April 2019, the students at Johns Hopkins University staged a sit-in that lasted 35 days in response against this prospective policy. They did so because Johns Hopkins Institution made a profit off the now cancelled ICE contract and know that armed private policing further profiles and stigmatizes Black and Brown residents and students. The Johns Hopkins staffing population in large were opposed to the prospective policy, with over 90 faculty members coming out. I, along with many residents signed and submitted petitions. I am also aware of the precedent of several Morgan State University armed officers involved in the high-profile death of Tyrone West over a traffic stop, casting strong doubts of an educational/health institution being involved in the implementation of public safety policy that includes more ammunition for violence.

Currently with the COVID-19 virus running rampant for almost a year now- taking lives, crippling businesses, and creating massive mental health issues- private policing should not and need not to be on Johns Hopkins' list of policies to implement. In addition, this nation is already in a place of reckoning with last summer's unrest around police homicide – Johns Hopkins need to be on the right side of the reckoning. Thank you for working to pass this bill as law.

Sincerely,

Charlene Rock-Foster
Baltimore City Resident