

Testimony for HB0336

I am Erini Lambrides, a resident of district 40 and an employee of Johns Hopkins University. I am writing to you in support of HB0336, to repeal Hopkins's private police and the police of other private institutions.

Johns Hopkins University long has espoused baseless platitudes of "Engaging with the Community" and being "A Good Neighbor to Baltimore". If the above were true, through community forums by their own design they would have never lobbied for the private police bill in the first place. Over 90% of the community meetings showed a litany of community opposition, and voting against the support of private police force. Over 6,152 community members stated their opposition to the police force in a JHU employee and student created 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.

The area that private police will be deployed, the Middle East neighborhood, is already heavily policed, and Hopkins security is already a huge presence. I have witness with my own eyes the racial profiling that already occurs. An unfortunately perfect example: Last week I witness a black man in a hoodie going for a run on Orleans street. This man was stopped by JHMI security personnel, and was asked what the rush was. This completely racially charged and illegal impromptu interrogation obviously did not occur to the white woman who ran past the security officers just moments before. These security officers were from Hopkins own personal, not the contracted workers who make up the bulk of their current security force. An armed Hopkins police force increases the chances of "just racist" incidents to turning into "racist and deadly incidents".

As the nation grapples with defining what policing should like in America, Hopkins is not to be trusted to put forth their own attempt. Over the years, JHU has made many 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.

Hopkins refuses to even listen to the COVID guidelines out of their own school of Public Health. They willingly, and knowingly, are risking the lives of not only their students, but employees, staff and community members by opening campus as the pandemic soars to new heights. As an undergraduate COVID cluster spreads, the university still maintains they will be able to "resume campus opening safely". COVID guidelines are clear, safe and community built policing is not. How am I to trust Hopkins to change their historically racist past and create a more "accountable" private policing in this more monumentally difficult problem?

