

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0336

Dear members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Priyal Gandhi, a concerned Johns Hopkins medical student writing to urge you to issue favorable support for HB0336, a bill to repeal Hopkins's private police and the police of other private institutions. This bill is an essential piece of legislation that will keep communities safe from harm.

Over 6,152 community members stated our opposition to the police force in a 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.

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. It's concerning that the area that private police will be first deployed, the Middle East neighborhood, is already heavily policed, and Hopkins security is already a huge presence.

In the death of Tyrone West, whose life was taken seven years ago by a Morgan State officer, we see the harm that University policing promises—in this case it was a Morgan State officer.

Research and history show that reform is ineffectual. We've had six years of reform efforts implemented in the wake of the 2014 killings of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, and way too many others. Yet, all of that reform didn't save Freddie Gray, or Alton Sterling, or Korryn Gaines, or Walter Scott, or Breonna Taylor, or George Floyd. Reform was not worth those lost lives and it certainly is not worth another.

We want the University to place the funds that were intended for JHPD, and more, in the hands of communities, such as residents of the Middle East near the medical campus. This is what the safety Johns Hopkins claims to desire looks like.

I urge you to do your job and represent your constituents and issue a favorable report for HB0336.

Best,

Priyal Gandhi