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February 10, 2021

Chair Luke Clippinger, Vice-Chair Vanessa E. Atterbeary, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

RE: Opposition to H.B.336 – Private Institutions of Higher Learning – Police Departments – Repeal and Prohibition

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 336, the legislation that would repeal the Community Safety and Strengthening Act and prohibit the development of a Johns Hopkins Police Department.

I received my B.A. degree from JHU in 1979. I now live one block from the Homewood campus. My younger son is in his ninth year on the Homewood campus; first as an undergraduate and now as a doctoral candidate. My safety and the safety of my son depend on a well-trained, properly supervised police department for the campus. Given the reputation of Baltimore as a crime-ridden city and the continuing challenges of the Baltimore Police Department, I believe it is important for Hopkins, the City's largest employer, to be able to say that it is doing everything it can, including the establishment of a well-trained, properly supervised police department, to keep its students, faculty, staff, and immediate neighbors safe.

I also am writing as a former employee of the Washington-Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) that as a civilian was detailed to Baltimore's City Hall from 2003 to 2007 to establish Operation Crime Watch in the wake of the Dawson Family Tragedy. I have crunched crime data and am very aware that too many of Baltimore's neighborhoods, including those near the Hopkins' campuses, are not safe. Eliminating the possibility of additional well-trained and properly-supervised officers will make the city less safe, not safer.

I have seen how officers and community residents can work together in the fight against crime. Just as we have seen many officers join the nationwide call for racial justice and long-overdue police reform, our city can be safer if we allow officers and residents to build the bonds that eventually will help strengthen our neighborhoods. We need this "Town & Gown" public safety effort.

I urge that House Bill 336 is defeated. Thank you for considering my letter.

Sincerely,

Kevin D. Cleary

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