

Written Testimony of Lorraine T. Dean, ScD
Support of HB1284: Johns Hopkins University - Police Department - Repeal
2/19/21

Opposing the Hopkins police force is of vital importance to me because as a Hopkins faculty member and East Baltimore community member, I will be influenced by their presence both at home and at work. When I learned that the JHUPD would move forward, I felt my best course of action would be to join the Johns Hopkins Police Accountability Board (before it was suspended), to which I was accepted.

My concerns about a JHUPD were both personal and professional. My personal concerns stem from having lived in several places that saw increased police presence while I lived there. Sadly, it led to racial profiling and additional harassment to me and the other members of my Black family, as well as emotional, time, and financial costs of fighting false allegations. I continue to have concerns about the potential for racial profiling, given that the JHPD may hire officers from the existing Baltimore Police Department which, just a few years ago, was cited by the US Department of Justice for its egregious racial profiling. My concerns are justified, as confirmed by the recent domestic terrorist attacks on the US Capitol, the uses of unnecessary force on peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters, and growing evidence in [other parts of the world](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/21/world/europe/germany-far-right-neo-nazis-police.html) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/21/world/europe/germany-far-right-neo-nazis-police.html>) that US police forces have been infiltrated by openly racist agents, that cannot be trusted to protect the health and safety of Black and Brown people. Over 6,152 community members join me in opposing a police force, as evidenced by [this petition](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdpsB7_92QbqA11C4ApIZqUVMmVL4Tj6l1Td2VV0bwoA1ba0g/viewform?gxids=7628) (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdpsB7_92QbqA11C4ApIZqUVMmVL4Tj6l1Td2VV0bwoA1ba0g/viewform?gxids=7628).

My professional concerns come from my work with students to identify studies on the relationship between policing and health, [which we've made public](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zf4_2mCs1rXL78KtlvsXUPQjabt5_kXt38THqReoT2Q/edit?ts=5f0f83b2) (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zf4_2mCs1rXL78KtlvsXUPQjabt5_kXt38THqReoT2Q/edit?ts=5f0f83b2). In reviewing the data, studies overwhelmingly show that greater police presence increase the risks of adverse mental and physical health (including death). Thus, as a public health expert, I cannot support any activities that increase police presence. But in addition to what I've explored in my work, I've been witness to how police presence harms me and family firsthand. Additionally, I am concerned about the use of an armed police force: more guns are not a solution or evidence-based preventive technique to stem violence and are likely to cause more harm than good. I am not the only faculty member at Hopkins expressing concern: in summer of 2020, Johns Hopkins Faculty Senate sent a resolution to Hopkins' President Ron Daniels requesting that the JHUPD be abandoned. This resolution was sent by the most powerful faculty representatives we have as faculty members.

Seeing so many recent public examples of the violence and unnecessary death that police have exacted on Black people terrifies me as a Black citizen with a Black family and Black partner. It's especially terrifying knowing that so many of these heinous acts

go unpunished because of structural barriers like the Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights that protects police from facing public accountability when they act badly.

Given all that we have seen with policing across our country, knowing that Hopkins still has the authority to move forward with a police force concerns me all the more. Despite that the JH Police Accountability Board members attempted to form a group that would truly hold any new police force accountable, our group was constantly met with barriers, poor communication, and a lack of resources that stymied our ability to move forward with our charge. In its first few months the JHPAB wasn't able to move past basic administrative issues like scheduling regular meetings or writing a collective letter to state our commitments, leaving many of us feeling hopeless that true accountability would ever happen. The experiment of having an accountability board has not worked, and I believe our only recourse is to abandon the idea of a JHU police force.

Thus, I urge you to vote in support of HB1284, to repeal Hopkins' private police.