

To whom it may concern,

I am a resident of the Abell neighborhood that is in close proximity to the Johns Hopkins Homewood campus. I am writing to support SB0276/HB0336 and the repeal of the Hopkins private police department.

Baltimore currently has among the highest per-capita spending on policing in the nation, and is routinely ranked as one of the most over-policed cities in the country. At a time when police accountability, both within Maryland and nationwide, is at the forefront of our conversations about racial and economic justice, adding additional police to an already over-policed city moves us in the wrong direction.

Johns Hopkins delayed the implementation of their private police force following the black lives matter protests that occurred this summer. This should be interpreted as an admission by Johns Hopkins that this private police force would add to the police violence epidemic affecting our country - a cynical move to buy time until things die down and they are no longer being scrutinized.

Currently the Baltimore Police Department is under a consent decree for its continued civil rights abuses and consistent use of excessive force in dealing with the Black residents of Baltimore. Why are we do believe that an even less accountable police force, controlled by one of the richest organizations in the city that is also in the business of buying up huge swaths of the city in lower-income majority Black neighborhoods will fare any better? What assurances do we have that this armed private police force will not be used to advance the financial interests of Johns Hopkins?

My neighborhood is already filled with various security personnel controlled by Johns Hopkins - from the friendly folks who stand on the corners to the Campus Patrol (who have been increasingly sneaking Baltimore City Sheriffs into their cars). These security personnel already project a sense of power and ownership by Johns Hopkins and work to make my neighborhood feel surveilled and unwelcoming to residents who don't look like they belong here. I do not want unaccountable, armed police with full arrest and kill powers in my neighborhood. I do not want Johns Hopkins to have a paramilitary organization that they can use to intimidate the residents of neighborhoods they are trying to buy up.

Repealing this bill is essential in moving Baltimore forward into an era of greater Police accountability and to start undoing the long segregationist history of this city.

— Peter Matchette