

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF MARYLAND HB0336: Private Institutions of Higher Education - Police Departments - Repeal and Prohibition

Submitted by:

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Dear House and/or Committee members, and all relevant parties,

My name is Jaime E. Martinez Grundman, and I live in Baltimore City. I have been a graduate student at the Johns Hopkins University (“JHU”) since 2015 and have lived in the immediate JHU Homewood campus area encompassed by the Maryland 43rd District (Charles Village and, currently, Hampden). I strongly support the proposed bill in regard to preventing private institutions in Maryland from instituting a police force, and I hope this testimony will shed light on the impetus for my support.

During my 5+ years as a Baltimore community member, like many of my peers and neighbors, I have been attuned to the issues regarding policing abuses in the city. Friends and family around the country, as well as abroad, are keen to comment on this city’s troubling history, especially in light of this past year’s civil unrest regarding unlawful and abusive policing around the country. It should therefore be clear that policing, although a necessary component of any given community, **when outside of a public charge and/or not held accountable**, results in and perpetuates imbalances of power that can lead to dire consequences. Through my own experiences, I have come to deeply understand JHU as an institution that: (1) is deeply embedded within diverse Baltimore neighborhoods, (2) caters primarily to populations of students and professionals from (though not exclusively) privileged backgrounds, and, accordingly, (3) distinguishes the needs for its own members as separate from those of community members. This already existing set-up, if JHU as a private institution were to institute a police force, will be largely unaccountable, resulting in negative, if not dire, consequences that top JHU administrators are not willing to foresee. And if they do foresee it, after listening to the litany of opposing voices from within JHU, the perceived “pros” (improved security, lessening of crime in and around campus buildings, etc.) seem to apparently outweigh the potential “cons” (racial profiling, policing abuses, further division from the Baltimore community, etc.).

Based on a particular personal experience regarding police use of force, I do not foresee an overall positive outcome if JHU were to have a private police force. For my undergraduate degree, I attended another institution with its own police department. During a public gathering **on-campus** I was physically assaulted by another student. Perhaps due to their resulting injuries being more severe than my own, I was arrested and removed from the premises without any form of explanation. Only after given the chance to offer my own account of the events, I was eventually escorted back home, but the experience (and weekslong investigation after the fact) left me shaken and unable to feel it a “safe” academic environment when police, armed and with arrest powers, act by force rather than conflict resolution strategies.

I urge you to support HB0336 so that both JHU and Baltimore City members are able to move past ideas of policing by force and identify positive strategies for improving the livelihoods and security of everybody. Thank you for your consideration.