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Dear Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair, House Judiciary Committee:

As a citizen of Baltimore City for the past seven years and a homeowner in the Eager Park neighborhood for the past four and a half years, I chose to stay in Baltimore for my career and in Eager Park specifically because I sought a high quality of life where I could walk, bike, or take public transit daily. I do not own a car. Also, the progress the City has recently made with sustainability, bike infrastructure, and new development encourage my belief in a brighter future.

Unfortunately, violent crime throughout the City remains a major issue that has not improved and is a threat to everyone's quality of life. Despite dedicated security for my neighborhood, there were multiple shootings at corner stores a half block from my house, and one occurred with local officials on site two years ago. The dedicated security will be discontinued, and I am concerned crime will return. A period of record crime is not timely to discourage enhanced investment in safety and security. Therefore, I write in opposition to House Bill 1284, which would eliminate the Johns Hopkins Police Department.

While I appreciate and respect concerns drawn by the Freddie Gray incident and similar, tragic events nationwide, the establishment of an additional Department does not have to be a burden on the community, it can be an opportunity. I am cautiously optimistic that the Johns Hopkins Police Department will be constructed on a scaffold of accountability and rigorous training that eliminate the use of deadly force and racially biased tactics. Such structure could be more advanced than that of other university police departments already found throughout the City while also helping to counter decades of BCPD culture. It is my expectation that the Johns Hopkins Police Department will be developed to complement the BCPD by decreasing its total area of responsibility, providing more localized and personalized policing, and increasing the overall officer pool.

Therefore, in my opinion, the benefits of establishing the Johns Hopkins Police Department vastly outweigh risks. I urge you to vote against House Bill 1284.

Sincerely,

Matt T. Oberdier