

I have been a professor at Johns Hopkins University for over twelve years. I understand the concerns and anxieties that drive the proposal for a private police force, but I am strongly opposed to the creation of this force because I believe that it is not in the interests of the safety and well-being of my own students, and it is not in the interests of the safety and well-being of my neighbors and community members in Baltimore. Studies in sociology and public health on the impact of police interactions upon youth of color abundantly demonstrate the profoundly negative effect of being repeatedly questioned, interrogated and stopped by police officers. We have all seen the vigils and memorials on behalf of those killed by police across our country, including, as in the case of Tyrone West on the campus of Morgan State, the tragic and all too familiar spectacle of armed officers using deadly force and ending the lives of people they are supposed to protect and serve. There is no need to militarize the space around Hopkins campuses, and doing so will polarize ongoing patterns of inequality, creating a kind of “two-tier” system of citizenship in Baltimore. The implicit message of such a force is that the lives of Hopkins students matter more than the lives of their neighbors. Furthermore, there is simply no way to ensure that Hopkins students, especially immigrants, students of color, and queer/trans students, won’t be subjected to profiling and harassment because of stereotypes about the implied or imagined face of who “belongs” on our campuses. There will be no turning back from the kind of violent incidents that we can expect once we have omnipresent armed patrols. This is the absolutely the wrong direction for a world class research university to pursue, and it sets a disturbing precedent for university/city partnerships. I don’t want to lose a single neighbor, and I don’t want to lose a single student, to police violence. I urge you not to let Hopkins have a private police force.

- Drew Daniel, feb 19, 2021