

To: Delegate Luke Clippinger and members of the House Judicial Committee  
From: Quan Gan  
Date: February 19, 2021

Dear Delegate Clippinger and members of the House Judicial Committee,

Greetings! My name is Quan Gan. I am a resident of Baltimore City and a researcher working at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. I write to you in earnest support for HB1284, a bill that would repeal provisions relating to the establishment and maintenance of a Johns Hopkins Police Department (JHPD). Adding more cops to one of the most heavily policed cities in the U.S. is a dangerous idea that we call on you to put to an end.

As employees of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, my colleagues and I are more than aware of the concerns about safety in the neighborhoods surrounding our campus. However, I believe that allowing Johns Hopkins to establish a private police department is not the right solution. The safety issues in many Baltimore communities are the result of widespread poverty and lack of access to job opportunities and social services, which Johns Hopkins University has regrettably contributed to in the past by not paying property taxes and by suing poor patients for medical debt. A private police department that is accountable only to Johns Hopkins itself would further alienate us from the surrounding community and the city at large without significantly improving campus safety.

Moreover, campus police departments in the US have a long track record of racist abuses against students and community members. At Yale, UCLA, the University of Chicago, and Arizona State University, among others, Black students, faculty, and community members have been harassed, tasered, shot, and assaulted by campus cops. In Baltimore, it was a Morgan State Police Officer who murdered Tyrone West in 2013. As an employee of color, I worry that my safety and the safety of my colleagues would in fact be threatened by the proposed private police department. The recent report that a high-ranking security official at Johns Hopkins University has for a long time engaged in racist and extremist rhetoric on social media further reinforced my belief that JHU cannot be trusted with a private police force.

Even if a private police department were able to somewhat improve campus safety, I seriously doubt it would be a good place for Johns Hopkins to spend its money. Even before the start of the pandemic last year, Johns Hopkins was already taking austerity measures and cutting benefits for its employees citing financial difficulties. These austerity measures have only been redoubled in the wake of the pandemic, aggravating the situation for those employees who are already facing financial and work challenges. Just recently, the University decided to exclude all graduate students from a \$500 end-of-year relief check and has formed plans to replace a significant number of its maintenance staff with cheaper outside contractors. If Johns Hopkins University really is on such a strained budget, why would it spend millions of dollars on a wasteful project such as a private police department?

The law authorizing the private police was unpopular among Hopkins students and faculty when it was first introduced and has proven even more unfavorable since. In the past two years, a groundswell of Johns Hopkins students and employees (me included) have constantly called on university administration and Board of Trustees to stop its push for a private police department. The University has chosen to ignore our demand and has instead used lies and misinformation to distort our message. It also threatened to use disciplinary actions against students who are vocal about this issue. Last year, amid a nationwide wave of protests following the police murder of

George Floyd, Johns Hopkins only agreed to put a two-year pause to the establishment of a private police force instead of abandoning the endeavor altogether. It is quite transparent to employees and community members alike that the University is not responding to our demands sincerely but is only biding its time. At this point, I believe that the University administration will only listen if the message comes from the General Assembly itself in the form of a law that explicitly prohibit them from pursuing their goal. That's why I am urging your favorable recommendation for HB1284. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Quan Gan