

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am a resident of Better Waverly neighborhood in Baltimore City and a 2014 alumnus of Johns Hopkins University testifying to ask you **to support House Bill 1284**. I am also working as part of Baltimore for Border Justice. House Bill 1284 would repeal the provision to establish a police department for Johns Hopkins University.



Many struggles, one mission.

Police are already not accountable enough, especially in Baltimore where our city is not allowed to control our own police force. The idea of a private institution having its own police force, especially one in a majority-black city that was founded by a slaveowner with a storied history of access denial, medical exploitation, and displacement of black communities, is destined to repeat and exacerbate the issues of systemic racism with policing in Baltimore.

As someone who lives in the Hopkins footprint, that spends time walking his dog on campus there, and hosts interns from the university, I do not feel safer knowing this private institution will now have employees on its payroll with guns and arrest powers. When something inevitably goes wrong, how can community members truly hold them accountable? We don't elect the president of Hopkins nor anyone who serves on or appoints members of the accountability board in the same way we elect the government officials, who have the power to remove a Police Commissioner or fire a public employee.

The biggest question I have about the Hopkins police is, what is the need? There isn't a spike in crime that drives this. There isn't a feeling amongst students it is necessary (with about three-quarters of those polled being against it). Amid calls to defund from even our Mayor, there isn't a lack of police in Baltimore City. The only answer I can come to is that this is about the protection of property and wealth in direct opposition to the protection black life.

Hopkins already has a lot of security. You can't walk a block in Charles Village without seeing them. You surely can't rob a stranger without them seeing it. Even in these circumstances, what is the benefit of having a gun in the situation? When it comes down to it, why give people guns if you don't want them to shoot them?

It is for these reason that I implore you **to support House Bill 1284**.

Best,
Jon Smeton
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Baltimore for Border Justice