



President Ronald J. Daniels Testimony

Friday, February 22, 2019

(as prepared for delivery)

Members of the delegation, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I am Ron Daniels, president of Johns Hopkins, and I am submitting testimony for the record on safety and security in Baltimore and in support of HB 1094, which would authorize the establishment of a police department at Johns Hopkins.

Let me say at the outset that I am here above all else as someone who shares with you a deep affection for our city and a profound concern for its citizens.

In the year since Johns Hopkins first proposed the creation of a university police department much has changed.

Perhaps most importantly, at your urging, we slowed down. To allow for more in-depth research, to listen to the community – our neighbors, our elected leaders, and our faculty, students and staff – and to develop a proposal that incorporates the feedback we received.

The legislation before you now reflects that comprehensive effort – months of exploration, study, and discussion. It is now the most rigorous, accountable, and transparent statutory mandate for any police department in the state and any university police department in the country.

What's also changed is that, with the arrival and expertise of Melissa Hyatt as the head of Johns Hopkins security, we have been able to add more specificity to what we

envision a Hopkins police department will look like. Including, as set forth in the Interim Study report, our bottom-line intention to replace our current contingent of armed off-duty BPD officers with a 100-person police department over 5 years.

This amounts to a total of about 10-12 officers and 2-3 supervisors on duty, at any given time, citywide (across all three campuses combined).

Which is not to diminish the significance of this legislation, nor to understate the impact this small department can have on public safety. But rather to put into context exactly what we are asking for.

Lastly, what has changed is the addition of numerous layers of public accountability. In this regard, I respectfully reject the characterization of this legislation as creating a private police force. In fact, I believe this is and can be public policing at its best – created by you as a public body and subjected by law to public reporting, public oversight, public involvement, and public standards.

On the other hand, what we all know has not changed are the unacceptably high levels of criminal violence, impacting every part of the city and subverting its possibilities.

The front page of the Baltimore Sun is especially jarring today, but not unprecedented.

And at Hopkins we worry not only about the large increases in aggravated assaults, armed robberies, and shootings around our campuses, but also about the unrelenting pace of murders and shootings all over the city – 12 shootings yesterday alone.

The scale and intensity of this violence, by any metric, is undermining the ability of our city and its citizens to thrive. It is hindering economic growth and opportunity.

And it demands new solutions from all of us.

I am here today because I believe strongly that a Hopkins police department is one of those solutions – that we can do better for the institution and make a meaningful contribution to the public safety of the city, in the same way as our public peers in the city and nearly all our private peers nationally that have sworn police departments.

And the Baltimore Police Department, as the new commissioner made clear in his letter to you, wants and needs this help.

In closing, I want simply to acknowledge that what you are being asked to do is not easy at a time when policing in America is in need of systemic change, and fairly engenders acrimony and fear, rather than a sense of protection or safe-haven, among so many of our fellow citizens.

I want to assure you that I would not make this request – and I would not stand behind this bill – if I did not believe it is the right thing to do for our city and for Johns Hopkins, and if I did not believe we can learn from the work of those who are seeking change, and learn from our own community, in order to get this right.

Next month marks 10 years since I arrived at Johns Hopkins and threw myself fully into all that Baltimore has to offer, and into the responsibility of leading one of Baltimore’s anchor institutions and its largest employer.

I refused then, as now, to accept the notion that one could be either for Hopkins or for the city. I insisted that we are one. I committed to partnering with and investing in us as one. And I believe as strongly as ever that we rise and fall together, as one.

I thank you for your time, and I urge a favorable report on HB 1094.