Dear Students, Faculty, Staff, and Neighbors:

This evening the Maryland General Assembly passed in final form SB 793, the Community Safety and Strengthening Act, to authorize Johns Hopkins University to establish a university police department and to increase the state’s investments in high-priority community programs.

As you know, this legislation grew out of an urgent need for new solutions to address increased crime on and around Johns Hopkins’ campuses in Baltimore. The path to its passage has been fraught, for our university and our city, and we want first and foremost to thank you—supporters and opponents alike—for your considered input and participation in critical conversations around policing, crime, community, race, and the appropriate role of a university in contributing to public safety.

These are complex issues, touching on deeply held beliefs and experiences, and we have been appropriately challenged to listen closely to the concerns of all those we are here to serve. At your urging, we have sought to bring to bear best practices, expertise, and research as we worked to develop a sound set of strategies for approaching the challenge before us.

We believe in the end that this legislation reflects an approach to university and community safety that we can be proud of at Johns Hopkins and in Baltimore, setting a standard as the most comprehensive set of university policing requirements anywhere. Yet we also know that the true test of this effort lies ahead, as we begin the work of building a constitutional, community-oriented, and publicly accountable university police department, with fidelity to the letter and spirit of this law.

We take seriously the responsibility now vested in us by the state, and entrusted to us by our neighbors and community leaders, to create a university police department that makes real the ideals and best practices of 21st Century policing. Moving forward, we will seek officers who are not only rigorously vetted and extensively trained but also guided by procedural justice, community trust, and cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Once the bill is signed into law it will go into effect on July 1, and we will move into a multiyear period of implementation. Our work in 2019 will include the start of discussions with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) around the drafting of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) and initial engagement with the community regarding the MOU and recommendations for the first Johns Hopkins Police Accountability Board. We also will begin to seek input regarding how best to collaborate with our neighbors to identify areas near our campuses where future JHPD patrols could be welcome and effective, and we will develop plans for the phased recruiting and training of new officers in accordance with the exacting standards set by the legislation.
In the meantime, we will continue to share information about the JHPD and to provide opportunities for feedback and engagement on the Public Safety Initiatives website. Under the leadership of Vice President Melissa Hyatt, the current Johns Hopkins Safety and Security operation also will continue to work every day to strengthen relationships with the community and keep our campuses and surrounding areas safe.

Johns Hopkins is steadfast in our determination to fulfill our responsibility to our students, faculty, staff, patients, and neighbors and to the city we call home. Even as we build this university police department, we will not waver from our commitment to long-term investments in job creation, economic development, education, and health care delivery that help alleviate the root causes of crime and create sustained opportunity here in Baltimore.

We look forward to continuing this important work together.

Sincerely,

Ronald J. Daniels
President, Johns Hopkins University

Paul B. Rothman
Dean of the Medical Faculty
CEO, Johns Hopkins Medicine