

SJ0004 –Use of Nuclear Weapons

March 13, 2025, Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee

Position: SUPPORT (FAV) Testimony of Lucy Duff

FOR WITNESS TESTIMONY

In support of a Maryland state Resolution for federal action to Back off the Brink of nuclear weapons, as called for this year in HJ0006, by Delegate Nicole Williams and 27 other House members, and SJ0004 its Senate counterpart, by Senator Clarence Lam:

First, why is this matter put forth as an issue for the states of the US? Several other states along with many local governments see it as such and have passed similar resolutions. Like Marylanders, their voters are also of course US citizens. Moreover, we live here in the shadow of the national capital, a likely target in the event of a nuclear war.

The formal policy in the resolution for no first use would go far toward putting the United States on record as a non-belligerent holder of nuclear weapons.

In its call for removing the President's sole authority to launch a nuclear strike, the resolution this year may cause many to reflect on the trustworthiness of the current incumbent. (So let Maryland join that call, the sooner the better.) Any President, however, might lapse in using rational judgment during a conflict with one or more other nations. This resolution imposes a requirement that the process includes multiple decision-makers; there are practical ways for the process to be so changed.

The resolution does not entail unilateral US action. Rather it calls for our nation to pursue a verifiable agreement among all the nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. It could thus hasten nuclear disarmament.

By requiring that the US nuclear arsenal be taken off hair-trigger alert, the resolution reduces the risk of its accidental use. An alarming number of near misses of such use have been documented.

The resolution would redirect federal funds currently spent on upgrading US nuclear weapons to programs for meeting social and human needs. In that way it would make a positive contribution to our collective and individual economic security.

Finally, let it be noted that this legislation would impose no financial cost on Maryland state, local governments, businesses or households.
