Testimony of Joseph Gerson PhD

Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security and American Friends Service Committee

Massachusetts Committee on Public Service, Nuclear Weapons Divestment (H.2202; S.1516)

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 Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony in support of the Nuclear Weapons Divestment bills (H.2202 and S.1516.) My name is Joseph Gerson. I am the President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, Director of the Peace and Economic Security Program of the American Friends Service Committee and Vice-President of the International Peace Bureau, both of which are Nobel Peace Prize recipient organizations.

My PhD is in international security studies. My books have focused on the uses and consequences of U.S. nuclear weapons from the A-bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the Clinton Administration. My articles have appeared in academic journals, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, the Spokesman and other publications. I was involved in helping to launch the nuclear weapons freeze movement of the 1980s which made enormous contributions to the negotiation of the U.S.-Soviet Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and thus to the end of the Cold War. Since our citizens movement defeated the ill-conceived plan to transform Boston Harbor into a nuclear weapons base in 1983, I have had the remarkable privilege of working closely with Japanese, Korean, U.S. and other nuclear weapons victims.

Let me begin by stressing the urgency of the moment. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has set their Doomsday Clock at 2 minutes to midnight, the closest to nuclear apocalypse since the beginning of the Cold War. This is compounded by the fact that our country has prepared and/or threatened to initiate nuclear war at least 30 times during international crises and wars.

Nuclear Weapons Divestment bills can help lead the way out of the nuclear crisis being created by the Trump administration and end the state’s complicity in preparations for omnicide. The New York City Council is within two votes of passing a veto-proof bill requiring that the city divest from investments in the nuclear weapons industry. Massachusetts should do the same.

I have been asked to focus my remarks on the dangers posed by the Trump Administration’s assault on treaties and the recent history of undermining the arms control architecture. This places us on the verge of extremely dangerous and uncontrolled nuclear arms races. Local efforts matter

 Few Americans know that a pillar of the seminal 1972 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the original nuclear powers’ commitment to good faith negotiations for the complete elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The need to begin these negotiations was reiterated by the International Court of Justice. Led by the U.S., which sabotaged the 2005 and 2015 NPT Review Conferences, the Treaty is losing its legitimacy and fueling forces for dangerous nuclear weapons proliferation.

Bill Clinton, my Georgetown classmate, pitched us into renewed confrontation with Russia, by reneging on the Bush I/Scowcroft - Gorbachev agreement providing for German reunification in exchange for the promise not to move NATO a centimeter closer to Moscow. NATO is now at Russia’s borders, and Russia has responded with its recommitment to rearmament and electoral subversion.

 W. Bush and Cheney sought U.S. first-strike nuclear warfare capability by building missile defense systems, shields against second strike retaliatory attacks to reinforce first-strike nuclear swords. This was outlawed by Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, President Bush and Cheney prevailed, and now missile defense systems are proliferating in the pursuit of absolute nuclear superiority.

Now Trump is removing the last vestiges of arms control. His withdrawal from the INF Treaty serves as the starting gun for new arms races. More, the New START Treaty limits strategic nuclear deployments and provides for intrusive inspections essential for trust building. The Treaty expires in 2021 but could have been extended for an additional five years. Trump and Bolton, and Pompeo opted against negotiations to extend the Treaty. New cruise missiles and nuclear weapons are now slated for deployment in Europe, increasing the danger of nuclear war and generating renewed opposition across Western Europe. Finally, the Trump Administration is signaling that it wants to opt out of the Open Skies Treaty, the last nuclear trust building foundation between the superpowers.

The existential truth is that if we don’t act, there may be no future generations left to ask, “What did you do to prevent nuclear war?” Let me also respond to the earlier defense of Raytheon’s production of and profiting from the weapons that have devastated Yemen. I am Jewish, and I am all too well aware that there were jobs and profits in the construction and operation of Auschwitz and other extermination camps. Similarly, today there are profits I the manufacture of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, the production of fossil fuels and in private prisons. These are simply evil. With will they can be ended, and other jobs created.