

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4685

To pause development of the new Sentinel program, extend the life of the Minuteman III, and redirect savings from Sentinel toward the Department of Education, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 23, 2025

Mr. KHANNA (for himself, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. THANEDAR) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Appropriations, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To pause development of the new Sentinel program, extend the life of the Minuteman III, and redirect savings from Sentinel toward the Department of Education, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Investing in Children
5 Before Missiles Act of 2025” or the “ICBM Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) According to the Congressional Budget Of-
4 fice, the projected cost to sustain and modernize the
5 United States nuclear arsenal, as of 2025, is “\$946
6 billion over the 2025–2034 period, or an average of
7 about \$95 billion a year”, and nuclear forces ac-
8 count for 8.4 percent of the total 10-year cost of the
9 plans for national defense outlined in the President’s
10 2025 budget submission.

11 (2) In September 2020, the Air Force awarded
12 a sole-source contract to Northrop Grumman for the
13 ground-based strategic deterrent program (now
14 called Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile pro-
15 gram), raising concerns that the absence of competi-
16 tion for the award would result in higher than pro-
17 jected costs to United States taxpayers. The pro-
18 gram is intended to replace 400 deployed Minute-
19 man III missiles with more than 600 new missiles,
20 to allow for test flights and spares.

21 (3) The Sentinel program has encountered sig-
22 nificant cost growth and schedule delays in recent
23 years, and the full extent of both remains uncertain
24 as the Department of Defense is currently restruc-
25 turing the program.

1 (4) In January 2024, increases in the total
2 costs of the Sentinel program triggered a review
3 under chapter 325 of title 10, United States Code
4 (commonly known as the “Nunn-McCurdy Act”),
5 which is intended to determine whether a program
6 that has experienced large cost overruns should con-
7 tinue, and what, if any, changes should be made to
8 control costs.

9 (5) In July 2024, the Department of Defense
10 completed that review and released a new estimate
11 of total costs for the program of \$141,000,000,000
12 in constant 2020 dollars, which is 81 percent (or
13 \$63,000,000,000) larger than the program’s baseline
14 2020 estimate of \$78,000,000,000. The total esti-
15 mated life cycle cost of the Sentinel program (not in-
16 cluding warheads) was estimated by the Department
17 of Defense to be \$260,000,000,000 in 2020 and is
18 undoubtedly higher today.

19 (6) In May 2025, the Air Force announced the
20 Sentinel program will likely “predominantly” require
21 digging fresh missile silos, a significant change from
22 previous plans to reuse existing silos and a move
23 that would likely cause further significant cost in-
24 creases and schedule delays.

1 (7) According to public reports, officials of the
2 Department of Defense expect the restructuring ef-
3 fort to delay the Sentinel program by several years.
4 The Department of Defense’s 2025 budget plans
5 called for initial operating capability to be achieved
6 in May 2029, a date that, as of the date of the en-
7 actment of this Act, looks unachievable. The Air
8 Force is considering contingency plans that would
9 extend the life of Minuteman III intercontinental
10 ballistic missiles by 11 more years to 2050 if delays
11 continue to plague the Sentinel missiles intended to
12 replace them.

13 (8) The National Nuclear Security Administra-
14 tion is developing a replacement intercontinental bal-
15 listic missile warhead, the W87–1, for the Sentinel
16 and expanding plutonium pit production to build
17 new warhead cores, costing at least \$14,000,000,000
18 and \$18,000,000,000, respectively.

19 (9) Even in the absence of an intercontinental
20 ballistic missile leg of the triad, the United States
21 would have an assured retaliatory capability in the
22 form of multiple ballistic missile submarines, which
23 are virtually undetectable, and there are no known,
24 near-term credible threats to the survivability of the
25 ballistic missile submarine force. The survivability of

1 the submarine force will be enhanced as the Depart-
2 ment of Defense moves to replace the Ohio class bal-
3 listic submarine fleet with the new Columbia class
4 ballistic missile fleet.

5 (10) While intercontinental ballistic missiles
6 have historically been the most responsive leg of the
7 United States nuclear triad, advances in ballistic
8 missile submarine communications to allow for the
9 dissemination of emergency action messages in war-
10 time have negated that advantage.

11 (11) Intercontinental ballistic missiles based in
12 silos are vulnerable and, once launched, cannot be
13 recalled, leaving decisionmakers with mere minutes
14 to decide whether to launch the missiles before they
15 are destroyed, known as a posture of “launch on
16 warning” or “launch under attack” in the face of a
17 perceived nuclear attack, greatly increasing the risk
18 of a national leader initiating a nuclear war by mis-
19 take.

20 (12) Under current policy, the President has
21 the authority—

22 (A) to launch United States nuclear weap-
23 ons first and is not limited to retaliation;

1 (B) to launch nuclear weapons under
2 warning of attack, rather than waiting for evi-
3 dence of attack; and

4 (C) to launch nuclear weapons on the
5 President's sole order.

6 (13) False alarms have happened multiple times
7 and can happen again. For example, in 1980, a false
8 alarm was reported to the Assistant to the President
9 for National Security Affairs and was almost re-
10 ported up to President Jimmy Carter as a real at-
11 tack but was luckily identified in time. Recent Pen-
12 tagon reports have found that, as a result of
13 cyberattacks, the President could be faced with false
14 warnings of attack or lose the ability to control nu-
15 clear weapons.

16 (14) In 1983, Stanislav Petrov, a former lieu-
17 tenant colonel of the Soviet Air Defense Forces cor-
18 rectly identified a false warning in an early warning
19 system that showed several United States incoming
20 nuclear missiles, preventing Soviet leaders from
21 launching a retaliatory response, earning Colonel
22 Petrov the nickname "the man who saved the
23 world".

24 (15) Former Secretary of Defense William J.
25 Perry wrote that the ground-based leg of the nuclear

1 triad is “destabilizing because it invites an attack”
2 and intercontinental ballistic missiles are “some of
3 the most dangerous weapons in the world” and
4 “could even trigger an accidental nuclear war”.

5 (16) General James Cartwright, former vice
6 chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and former Com-
7 mander of the United States Strategic Command,
8 wrote, with Secretary Perry, “[T]he greatest danger
9 is not a Russian bolt but a US blunder—that we
10 might accidentally stumble into nuclear war. As we
11 make decisions about which weapons to buy, we
12 should use this simple rule: If a nuclear weapon in-
13 creases the risk of accidental war and is not needed
14 to deter an intentional attack, we should not build
15 it. . . . Certain nuclear weapons, such as . . . the
16 [intercontinental ballistic missile], carry higher risks
17 of accidental war that, fortunately, we no longer
18 need to bear. We are safer without these expensive
19 weapons, and it would be foolish to replace them.”.

20 (17) General George Lee Butler, the former
21 Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Air Command
22 and subsequently Commander-in-Chief of the United
23 States Strategic Command, said, “I would have re-
24 moved land-based missiles from our arsenal a long
25 time ago. I’d be happy to put that mission on the

1 submarines. So, with a significant fraction of bomb-
2 ers having a nuclear weapons capability that can be
3 restored to alert very quickly, and with even a small
4 component of Trident submarines—with all those
5 missiles and all those warheads on patrol—it’s hard
6 to imagine we couldn’t get by.”.

7 (18) While a sudden “bolt from the blue” first
8 strike from a near-peer nuclear adversary is a highly
9 unlikely scenario, extending the Minuteman III
10 would maintain the purported role of the interconti-
11 nental ballistic missile leg of the triad to absorb such
12 an attack.

13 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY ON MINUTEMAN III, SEN-**
14 **TINEL, AND EDUCATION FUNDING.**

15 It is the policy of the United States that—

16 (1) as of the date of the enactment of this Act,
17 the Sentinel program is significantly over budget
18 and behind schedule and should be paused and re-
19 evaluated for need and technical merit;

20 (2) the operational life of the Minuteman III
21 missile should be safely extended until at least 2050;
22 and

23 (3) investments in the Department of Edu-
24 cation are a better use of United States taxpayer re-

1 sources than continuing with the current Sentinel
2 program.

3 **SEC. 4. AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS FOR EDUCATION INSTEAD**
4 **OF SENTINEL.**

5 (a) TRANSFER FROM DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.—
6 The Secretary of Defense shall transfer all amounts ap-
7 propriated to the Department of Defense for the research,
8 development, test, and evaluation of the Sentinel program,
9 and available for obligation as of the date of the enactment
10 of this Act, to the Department of Education to carry out
11 part A of title I of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
12 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311 et seq.).

13 (b) TRANSFER FROM NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY
14 ADMINISTRATION.—The Secretary of Energy shall trans-
15 fer all amounts appropriated to the National Nuclear Se-
16 curity Administration for the W87–1 warhead modifica-
17 tion program, and available for obligation as of the date
18 of the enactment of this Act, to the Department of Edu-
19 cation to carry out part A of title I of the Elementary
20 and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311
21 et seq.).

1 **SEC. 5. PROHIBITION ON USE OF FUNDS FOR GROUND-**
2 **BASED STRATEGIC DETERRENT PROGRAM**
3 **AND W87-1 WARHEAD MODIFICATION PRO-**
4 **GRAM.**

5 None of the funds authorized to be appropriated or
6 otherwise made available for fiscal year 2026 may be obli-
7 gated or expended for the Sentinel program or the W87-
8 1 warhead modification program.

9 **SEC. 6. INDEPENDENT STUDY ON EXTENSION OF MINUTE-**
10 **MAN III INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MIS-**
11 **SILES.**

12 (a) INDEPENDENT STUDY.—Not later than 30 days
13 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
14 of Defense shall seek to enter into a contract with the Na-
15 tional Academy of Sciences to conduct a study on extend-
16 ing the life of Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic
17 missiles to 2050 or beyond.

18 (b) STAFFING.—

19 (1) EXPERTS.—The conduct of the study re-
20 quired by subsection (a) shall include input from a
21 wide variety of technical and subject matter experts.

22 (2) PROHIBITION ON CERTAIN AIR FORCE EM-
23 PLOYEES.—No member or former member of the Air
24 Force or employee or former employee of the De-
25 partment of the Air Force who is or was paid for
26 work relating to the Sentinel program may partici-

1 pate in the conduct of the study required by sub-
2 section (a).

3 (c) ELEMENTS.—The study required by subsection
4 (a) shall address the following:

5 (1) A comparison of the costs through 2050
6 of—

7 (A) extending the life of Minuteman III
8 intercontinental ballistic missiles; and

9 (B) deploying the Sentinel program.

10 (2) An analysis of opportunities to incorporate
11 technologies into the Minuteman III intercontinental
12 ballistic missile program as part of a service life ex-
13 tension program that could also be incorporated in
14 a possible future Sentinel program, including, at a
15 minimum, opportunities to increase resilience
16 against adversary missile defenses.

17 (3) An analysis of the benefits and risks of in-
18 corporating sensors and nondestructive testing meth-
19 ods and technologies to reduce destructive testing re-
20 quirements and increase the service life and number
21 of Minuteman III missiles through 2050.

22 (4) An analysis and validation of the methods
23 used to estimate the operational service life of Min-
24 uteman II and Minuteman III motors, taking into
25 account the test and launch experience of motors re-

1 tired after the operational service life of such motors
2 in the rocket systems launch program.

3 (5) An analysis of the risks and benefits of al-
4 ternative methods of estimating the operational serv-
5 ice life of Minuteman III motors, such as those
6 methods based on fundamental physical and chem-
7 ical processes and nondestructive measurements of
8 individual motor properties.

9 (6) An analysis of risks, benefits, and costs of
10 configuring a Trident II D5 submarine-launched bal-
11 listic missile for deployment in a Minuteman III silo.

12 (7) An analysis of the impacts of the estimated
13 service life of the Minuteman III force associated
14 with decreasing the deployed intercontinental bal-
15 listic missiles delivery vehicle force from 400 to 300
16 or less.

17 (8) An assessment of the extent to which the
18 Columbia class ballistic missile submarines will pos-
19 sess features that will enhance the current invulner-
20 ability of ballistic missile submarines of the United
21 States to future antisubmarine warfare threats.

22 (9) An analysis of the extent to which an exten-
23 sion of the life of the Minuteman III missiles would
24 impact the decision of the Russian Federation to
25 target intercontinental ballistic missiles of the

1 United States in a crisis, compared to proceeding
2 with the Sentinel.

3 (10) A best case estimate of what percentage of
4 the strategic forces of the United States would sur-
5 vive a counterforce strike from the Russian Federa-
6 tion, broken down by intercontinental ballistic mis-
7 siles, ballistic missile submarines, and heavy bomber
8 aircraft.

9 (11) The benefits, risks, and costs of relying on
10 the W-78 warhead for either the Minuteman III or
11 a new Sentinel missile as compared to proceeding
12 with the W-87 life extension.

13 (12) The benefits, risks, and costs of adding
14 additional launchers on submarines or uploading
15 submarine-launched ballistic missiles with additional
16 warheads to compensate for a reduced deployment of
17 intercontinental ballistic missiles of the United
18 States.

19 (d) REPORT REQUIRED.—

20 (1) SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT OF DE-
21 FENSE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of
22 the enactment of this Act, the National Academy of
23 Sciences shall submit to the Secretary of Defense a
24 report containing the results of the study conducted
25 under subsection (a).

1 (2) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—Not later than
2 210 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
3 the Secretary shall transmit to the appropriate con-
4 gressional committees the report required by para-
5 graph (1), without change.

6 (3) FORM.—The report required by paragraph
7 (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may
8 include a classified annex.

9 (4) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
10 TEES DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term “ap-
11 propriate congressional committees” means—

12 (A) the Committee on Armed Services, the
13 Committee on Foreign Relations, and the Com-
14 mittee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

15 (B) the Committee on Armed Services, the
16 Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Com-
17 mittee on Appropriations of the House of Rep-
18 resentatives.

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