

CONGRESSIONAL
SPORTSMEN'S
FOUNDATION

To: **Hon. Brian J. Feldman**
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **Senate Bill 181 – Hunting – Nonlead Ammunition**

Position: **Oppose**

Date: **2/3/2026**

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

As the Assistant Manager, Mid-Atlantic States for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), and as a generational Eastern Shore Native and a resident hunting and fishing license holder, I respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 181 (SB 181) – Hunting – Nonlead Ammunition.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitals advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

SB 181 will require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mandate the use of nonlead ammunition for all game species on or before July 1, 2029. The long-term effects of a statutory ban on lead hunting ammunition may be extremely detrimental to conservation funding, which is directly driven by hunters. Moreover, there are proven-successful incentive-based programs run by other states to encourage hunters to make the voluntary switch to lead alternatives that avoid these unintended, but foreseeable consequences. CSF strongly suggests that Maryland look to develop and implement a similar program that could be managed by the DNR which would allow them to address the social concerns that have been raised around lead hunting ammunition, without compromising their funding stream.

When it comes to lead ammunition bans, the negative impact to hunter participation, and ultimately conservation funding, is of concern to CSF. As of 2025, there were 113,137 certified paid hunting license holders in Maryland that generated \$6,301,731 in hunting license sales. As a direct result of

this hunting participation, Maryland was then able to access \$8,323,089 in USFWS Wildlife Restoration dollars (also generated by sportsmen and women through excise taxes on outdoor gear, including ammunition), totaling more than \$14.6M in conservation dollars from hunting alone. Hunters are boots-on-the-ground conservationists that continue to provide the most efficient and cost-effective method of managing wildlife populations.

In the current market, non-lead ammunition is not sufficiently available to accommodate a mass transition, and that ammo which is available in the market is more costly, which may prevent more cost-sensitive hunters from participating in a time-honored tradition that is a pillar of the state's culture. Additionally, like many states in the region, Maryland is continuing to see a steady increase in human-wildlife conflicts, particularly with White-tailed deer populations. The nonlead ammunition provision within SB 181 will likely eliminate opportunity for hunters to take game, as they may not be able to hunt if they cannot access non-lead ammo. The unintended, but foreseeable consequence of this proposed lead ammunition ban will ultimately result in the legislature creating a new barrier for hunters to keep wildlife populations such as White-tailed deer within acceptable biological and social carrying capacities.

Creating this participation barrier harms more than just Maryland's sportsmen and women and the wildlife that will no longer be properly managed through hunting; it also has significant negative financial impact on both the DNR and the state's economy. As noted above, Maryland's DNR receives significant funding through the unique "user pays – public benefits" structure of the ASCF. Sportsmen and women support wildlife management through purchasing sporting licenses, as well as a manufacturer-level excise tax that is levied on outdoor goods such as firearms and ammunition (Pittman-Robertson).

In closing, CSF encourages the legislature and the Department of Natural Resources to work together to implement incentive-based programs for the use of non-lead hunting ammunition by hunters if there exists demonstrable scientific evidence that such an effort is needed to address population-level impacts of lead exposure in specific wildlife species. CSF further recommends that such a program be developed and tested prior to any further consideration of a statutory ban on lead ammunition with its unintended and consequential diminishment of conservation funding. For these reasons, we respectfully request an unfavorable report on SB 181.

Sincerely,



Kaleigh E. Leager

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