



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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February 27, 2024

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Hunting - Lead and Lead-Based Ammunition - Phase-Out – SB 983 – Support

Chair Feldman, Vice - Chair Kagan, members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee vote favorably for Hunting - Lead and Lead-Based Ammunition - Phase-Out – SB 983.

This bill would require the Department of Natural Resources to establish a certain process to phase out on or before December 31, 2026, the use of lead or lead-based ammunition for hunting; and requiring the Department to establish a process to certify ammunition as nonlead ammunition.

Lead has been studied extensively for over 100 years because of its negative impacts to wildlife and humans. Numerous species of wildlife that are found in Maryland are poisoned by lead bullets and shells including hawks, ravens, turkey vultures, eagles, and grizzly bears. Lead causes widespread damage to cells and organs when it is ingested, inhaled, or absorbed in surprisingly small quantities. In fact, lead fragments have been found in wild game meat processed for human consumption. Even if a hunter attempts to remove the largest remaining pieces of the bullet from the dead animal, tiny fragments of lead enough to poison both humans and wildlife still remain in both the meat and parts that are left behind.

Hunters can use alternatives to lead in shot and rifle bullets. These include steel, copper, bismuth, and tungsten. Research has shown that they are as effective as lead but with the significant advantage that they are not toxic. It is time to factor in the environmental impacts of using lead ammunition and transition to safer alternatives.

In closing, I would like to thank Senator Lewis Young for her sponsorship of SB 983 and ask the committee for a favorable report.