



February 26, 2024

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Testimony on: Bill to Phase Out Lead Ammunition in Maryland

Position: Support: SB0983

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee

I write on behalf of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) in strong support of SB0983.

Impact of Lead Shot on Birds

The presence of lead in the environment, whether from spent ammunition or discarded fishing tackle, is deleterious to many forms of wildlife, but particularly to raptors and water birds. Lead has been shown to reduce populations of Bald Eagles by 4.8% and those of Golden Eagles by 0.8%.ⁱ Other studies have concluded that lead suppresses the vigor of Bald Eagle populationsⁱⁱ and decreases the resilience of Golden Eagle populations to other environmental toxinsⁱⁱⁱ and interferes with their motor and immune systems^{iv}. Both species are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act which prohibits ‘take’ of either species, where take is defined as harming them in various ways, including poisoning^v. Regardless, both species are still poisoned whenever they eat wildfowl or fish containing lead. In addition to eagles, carrion eating birds, namely vultures, condors and corvids, are poisoned by the lead in carcasses. Exposure to lead causes lethal and sub-lethal impacts in these and other bird species.^{vi}

Bans Do Work

Bans on the use of lead have already shown promising results. The 1991 ban on lead shot for hunting waterfowl was followed by reduced numbers of crippled ducks and geese^{vii}, and lower detectable levels of lead in the blood of ducks,^{viii} and less non-hunting mortality among ducks.^{ix} Following a lead shot ban in the California Condor’s range in 2008, lead exposure to birds of prey fell as hunters obeyed the new ordinance^x.

Banning lead would also have positive impacts on human health since, according to the World Health Organization, there is no safe level of lead^{xi}. The ban will thus also protect those who eat wildfowl.

Accordingly we ask the Committee to vote favorably on SB0983.

MOS

MOS is a 2000-strong member volunteer organization that is dedicated to the study, conservation and enjoyment of birds in Maryland and beyond. We were founded in 1945 and are organized into 15 chapters throughout the state. We lead field trips, organize lectures, have

an active youth sector, conduct period bird counts, hold an annual convention and own 10 sanctuaries in various parts of state.

In closing, I thank you and the Committee for considering our request.

Sincerely,



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- ^x Kelly, R.T. et al. (2011). Impact of the California Lead Ammunition Ban on Reducing Lead Exposure in Golden Eagles and Turkey Vultures. *PLoS One*, 6(4).
- ^{xi} <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/lead-poisoning-and-health#:~:text=There%20is%20no%20known%20safe,symptoms%20and%20effects%20also%20increa se.>