



February 19, 2025

Environment and Transportation Committee
ATTN: Chair Marc Korman
251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Oppose House Bill 0741

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Honorable Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the organizations listed below, we write to you in opposition to House Bill 0741 that proposes to phase out all lead ammunition for hunting purposes and respectfully ask for an unfavorable report for the reasons outlined below.

Our organizations, along with active members who live, hunt, and recreationally shoot in Maryland, strongly oppose undue lead ammunition restrictions that would significantly restrict hunting and shooting access for these important user groups in Maryland. We, along with the federal Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council, believe that efforts related to non-traditional ammunition should not be blanket mandates but rather focus on educational and voluntary efforts.

Mandating non-traditional ammunition for hunting – especially at a time when ammunition can be hard to find in many places, particularly for certain calibers – is unnecessary, unwarranted, and will undoubtedly hurt hunter recruitment and retention in the state. States throughout the country are grappling with ways to increase hunter participation and protect crucial conservation funding, and these restrictions only add additional barriers to entry for hunters, especially new, novice, youth, or rural hunters.

Not only will access to, and availability of, non-lead-based ammo be limited, but the price difference between lead ammunition and non-traditional ammunition can provide yet another barrier for those wishing to hunt throughout Maryland. This bill would disproportionately affect those who may not be able to find and/or afford more expensive non-lead ammunition as well as hunters in rural areas throughout the state. The result of prohibiting lead ammunition is that hunters will simply not have the ammunition they need to hunt, or purchasing ammunition will become considerably more difficult, both of which stand to lead to fewer hunters afield and

fewer conservation dollars generated through the sale of licenses, tags and ammunition.

The proposed phase-out ignores the importance of hunting to both Maryland's heritage and to the state's economy. Recent reports show that Maryland hunters contribute \$328 million to the economy while directly supporting over 4100 jobs and providing over \$29 million to state and local taxes. Additionally, the purchase of licenses and resulting federal dollars apportioned through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Restoration Program totaled nearly \$18 million last year. These dollars go to support conservation projects, including increasing access, habitat improvement, wildlife management, scientific research, hunter education, land acquisition and more.

A potential decline in hunter recruitment and participation, as well as resultant declines in conservation funding and hunting's role as a management tool, must be weighed against the potential benefits of a lead phase-out. Those benefits are far more limited than proponents of a lead ban like to admit. Use of lead ammunition is **not** causing a reduction in bird populations. Rather, recent studies have suggested that ingestion of lead ammunition *slows* the population growth rate of eagles *but does not reduce said population*. Thus, the *very best* scenario articulated by those who are pushing a lead ban is that eagle populations continue to grow (at a slightly lower rate), all the while knowing that hunter recruitment and wildlife conservation dollars will be significantly reduced as a result of the ban.

Finally, this legislation lacks any scientific support. There have been no significant environmental or health impacts caused by hunters using traditional ammunition in the state of Maryland. Unsurprisingly, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation has previously opposed this kind of bill because it restricts hunting access and achieves extremely minimal benefit. As explained in the New York Department's Lead Ammunition Working Group report regarding use of traditional ammo, the Working Group did not recommend a lead ammo ban, because it "would be challenging to advance and ... come with significant social costs, potentially compromising the effectiveness of other conservation efforts." The Working Group further explained that any legislative ban on the use of traditional ammo on state lands "would immediately create additional costs and challenges for hunters due to availability issues. Also, the use of lead hunting ammunition for upland game is not a documented source of water contamination." The Working Group expressed concern that, due to the higher cost and limited availability of non-lead ammo, a lead ammunition ban "may reduce hunting activity on public lands and may impact deer population management on these properties."

Sound, science-based conservation and management decisions is a key tenet of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. State wildlife agency professionals understand and use this model every day and are the ones best suited to make wildlife management decisions. Being so, we respectfully ask that you oppose House Bill 0741.

Maintaining America's large number of hunters and target shooters is crucial to maintaining the revenues necessary to sustain abundant wildlife and wildlife habitat—for both game and non-game—conservation programs as well as access related programs. Funds generated through the sale of hunting licenses, tags, permits, and ammunition all go to the benefit of Maryland's natural resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important measure.

Sincerely,

Beebe R. Frederick, III
Safari Club International

Christopher G. Kopacki, Ph.D.
National Shooting Sports Foundation

Todd Adkins, Ph.D.
Sportsmen's Alliance