



Maryland Farm Bureau

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February 3, 2026

To: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Opposition of SB181 Hunting – Lead and Lead-Based Ammunition – Phase-Out**

On behalf of the over 7,000 members of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in opposition to HB181 Hunting – Lead and Lead-Based Ammunition – Phase-Out. This proposed legislation mandates a statewide phase-out of lead ammunition for all hunting activities beginning in 2027 and culminating in a complete ban by July 1, 2029. The bill requires hunters to transition to nonlead ammunition for all game species, with limited exceptions only when nonlead products are deemed not commercially available for a specific weapon.

Maryland Farm Bureau's grassroots adopted policy is clear that the organization opposes any restriction on the use of lead ammunition for all non-waterfowl hunting, making this bill directly contrary to member-driven positions. For tens of thousands of Maryland hunters, including farmers who rely on hunting to manage crop-damaging wildlife, lead ammunition remains a lawful, effective, affordable, and widely used tool, and SB 181 imposes a mandate that Farm Bureau members have explicitly rejected.

Farmers across Maryland rely heavily on hunting to control deer, turkey, and other wildlife populations that cause significant damage to crops, and Farm Bureau policy emphasizes the need for more tools, not fewer, to effectively manage overpopulated species and nuisance wildlife. By limiting ammunition options, SB 181 risks reduced hunter participation due to higher ammunition costs and supply constraints, lower harvest success, and greater crop losses, all of which run counter to the State's need to address severe wildlife-related agricultural damage. Maryland already faces costly and dangerous deer overpopulation challenges, and this bill could unintentionally worsen them at a time when proactive population control is essential for both agriculture and roadway safety.

Maryland Farm Bureau also opposes the creation of state-specific mandates that put Maryland farmers, hunters, and rural communities at a competitive disadvantage compared to neighboring states. Many policies throughout the Farm Bureau book warn against Maryland adopting unique, burdensome standards not required elsewhere, especially when they increase costs or regulatory burdens without providing meaningful benefits. A statewide ammunition ban would impose higher costs on Maryland hunters than those in surrounding states, require ammunition types that are often less available, and risk reducing out-of-state hunter visitation and the rural economic activity that comes with it.



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Farm Bureau strongly supports hunting participation and opposes policies that discourage responsible hunters, and many sections of the organization's policy promote expanded deer hunting opportunities, Sunday hunting, and improved wildlife-damage control. By forcing a statewide shift in ammunition types, SB 181 creates another barrier to hunting participation at a time when the hunter population is aging and shrinking, which undermines wildlife management, food donation programs, and the agricultural community's ability to mitigate crop damage. Maryland Farm Bureau agrees that hunters should be educated about responsible field practices and environmental stewardship, but mandatory ammunition bans are not the correct policy approach. The organization has consistently supported voluntary, incentive-based programs over mandates, and other states have successfully reduced wildlife exposure to lead ammunition through collaborative, not compulsory, approaches.

For these reasons, Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully urges the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 181. The bill conflicts directly with adopted Farm Bureau policy, undermines critical wildlife-management and crop-damage prevention efforts, imposes unnecessary financial and practical burdens on Maryland hunters, and creates Maryland-only disadvantages without demonstrating sufficient scientific or economic justification. Thank you for the opportunity to share our position.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please contact Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions