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January 30, 2026

Senator Brian J. Feldman
Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) writes in support of Senate Bill 181. GHHI has been at the frontline of lead poisoning prevention for over three decades by helping to elevate Maryland as a national leader and working to reduce childhood lead poisoning by 99% in our state. GHHI also provides tenants' rights assistance, rental property owner compliance assistance and legal representation of tenants statewide for the repair of lead hazards and other hazardous conditions in homes throughout Maryland. Furthermore, in addition to serving as the President and CEO of GHHI, I also serve as the Chair of the Maryland Lead Poisoning Prevention Commission and lead nationwide efforts on combatting the harmful effects of lead in housing and in our environment.

Senate Bill 181 focusses on an often-overlooked issue that requires attention – lead in ammunition as a source of lead exposure. Anyone that consumes hunted game meat can be exposed to lead from hunters using leaded ammunition. Hunters themselves can also be exposed to lead vapors and residue through using lead ammunition in their firearms. Leaded ammunition can also end up in the food chain from being fired in the wild by polluting soil and or by being eaten by animals which are later consumed by humans or other animals.

Lead shot can make its way into our public water systems, or more acutely, into well water in individual homes that may become contaminated. Lead from ammunition is a direct threat to wildlife, especially birds and other animals, that ingest lead shot when they mistake it for a food source or when they consume an animal that has been shot with lead ammunition. This lead direct ingestion in animals can cause dramatic harmful health effects up to and including death.

Hunters are also not the only Marylanders at risk of lead exposure. A 2022 study by Totoni et al. found that families relying on food banks in the U.S. that receive donated hunted game meat are at a higher risk for elevated blood lead levels.¹ This is because most donated hunted game meat

¹ Samantha Totoni et al., *Biting the Bullet: A Call for Action on Lead-Contaminated Meat in Food Banks*, 112 Am. J. Pub. Health S651 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2022.307069>.

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is not inspected to discard packages containing ammunition-derived lead fragments. Given that initiatives such as the NRA *Hunters for Hungry* initiative have resulted in over millions of pounds of game meat being donated to food banks annually,² this is also a real concern for Marylanders who rely on these programs.

Current CDC guidance says that there is no safe level of lead in the blood.³ Lead poisoning contributes to permanent issues in childhood brain development, resulting in lower levels of success in school and ultimately leading to higher levels of dropouts and juvenile delinquencies. This issue disproportionately affects overburdened and underserved communities, hindering the ability of children to thrive and increasing costs associated with criminal justice and education accommodations. For adults, lead poisoning can cause high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, reproductive harm, heightened risk to pregnant women, and more.

Lead-free alternatives exist for ammunition including steel, copper, bismuth, and tungsten. Maryland should lead the way phasing out a highly preventable source of lead. California passed Assembly Bill 711, banning the use of lead ammunition for all hunting starting in 2019. Maryland must follow to achieve the over-arching goal of ending lead poisoning.

We ask for a Favorable Report on SB181.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

64715EFD32CD49A
Ruth Ann Norton
President and CEO

² NRA Hunters' Leadership Forum, *Hunters for the Hungry organizations provided almost 1.6 million pounds of game meat in 2022*, NRA Family (July 6, 2023), <https://www.nrafamily.org/content/nra-hunters-leadership-forum-supports-hunters-for-the-hungry-programs-in-2023>.

³ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, *About Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention* (Aug. 21, 2025), <https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/about/index.html>.