

Please find **UNFAVORABLE SB0181**
Hunting – Lead and Lead-Based Ammunition – Phase-Out

While SB0181 is framed as an environmental and public health measure, experience from other states—most notably California—demonstrates that this approach carries **serious unintended consequences for hunters, conservation funding, and state revenues.**

California’s statewide lead ammunition ban, fully implemented in 2019 [1], resulted in **higher ammunition costs, reduced availability, and declining hunter participation.** Non-lead ammunition often costs two to three times more than traditional lead alternatives and is unavailable or impractical for many common or legacy firearms. Faced with these barriers, many hunters reduced participation or left the activity entirely. This decline had predictable downstream effects:

- **Reduced hunting license sales**
- **Lower ammunition and equipment purchases**
- **Lost state and local tax revenue tied to hunting activity**

More concerning, reduced participation and ammunition sales threaten **federal Wildlife Restoration funding** under the Pittman-Robertson Act. These funds—derived from excise taxes on firearms and ammunition—support wildlife habitat management, hunter education, and conservation programs. When lawful ammunition sales and participation decline, states receive **less federal conservation funding.** California historically received tens of millions of dollars annually through this program; policies that discourage hunters directly undermine the conservation model itself. [2]

SB0181 risks repeating these mistakes in Maryland. By significantly increasing costs and restricting ammunition choice, the bill would:

- Disproportionately harm low-income hunters and families who rely on hunting for food
- Reduce hunting participation and youth engagement
- Shrink state license revenue
- Decrease Maryland’s share of federal Wildlife Restoration funds

Ironically, a bill promoted as protecting wildlife may ultimately **reduce the funding that sustains wildlife conservation.** [3]

SB0181 relies on generalized claims rather than Maryland-specific evidence of population-level harm, and it imposes sweeping mandates that risk long-term damage to Maryland’s conservation framework. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue an **unfavorable (UFAV) report on Senate Bill 181.**

[1] <https://www.shootingnewsweekly.com/ammunition/lead-ammo-has-been-banned-so-why-are-agenda-driven-researchers-still-blaming-hunters-and-traditional-ammo-for-struggling-california-condors/>

[2] <https://www.gohunt.com/browse/journal/the-life/the-economic-impact-of-cas-lead-ammo-ban>

[3] <https://www.guns.com/news/2024/03/25/gun-ammo-sales-translate-to-989-million-for-state-conservation-efforts>

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