

MD SB 181 – Lead Ammunition Phase-Out

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman

Chairman, Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 181 – Lead Ammunition – Phase-Out – FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

I am Michael Soukup. I am a retired federal scientist, with numerous lifetime achievement awards for interpreting and applying science to large scale environmental issues. In my career I worked as an ecological research scientist, as Regional Chief Scientist for the northeast, Research Director at Everglades National Park, and Chief Scientist for National Parks. Upon retirement I served as President and CEO at the Schoodic Institute in mid-coast Maine. I am writing to support SB 181.

I am also writing as someone who grew up hunting along Chesapeake shores. That experience shaped my lifelong love of wildlife and the idea that we must pass our wondrous natural heritage along--to our children and the next generation in perpetuity.

As Chief Scientist for national parks, I learned that prevention of environmental problems whenever possible was vastly easier (and cheaper) than repair and restoration. SB 101 works in that direction.

I believe the facts are clear. Lead persists, and it cycles and accumulates in our wildlife. For example, more than 130 wildlife species in national parks suffer from lead exposure. Restoration of condors in national parks was a necessary but expensive proposition, yet those few still living today still have blood levels indicating lead exposure. Half of our Bald (and Golden) eagles, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, are suffering from acute or chronic lead poisoning. Modern wildlife management dictates protecting predators and scavengers—their roles in nature are essential. Hence, lead from firearms should no longer find its way into coastal and upland food chains. Prevention now will be for the immense good of today's and tomorrow's Marylanders, and all those who treasure the outdoors and healthy wild life--especially hunters, hikers, and birders.

There is ample evidence for moving forward given the feasible and high-performance alternatives to lead in ammunition. Phasing out lead-based ammunition is a compromise that is far less difficult to accommodate and afford than most investments in environmental safeguards (like lead in toys, house paint, and gasoline), and most all restoration efforts. And it is a solid investment in long-term public health, especially for responsible hunters who eat what they kill.

I believe that the State of Maryland is poised to take decisive, leadership action by passing SB 181 to phase-out of lead ammunition for hunting on Maryland on state lands. I hope you will do it. It is the right thing to do, and something each Maryland legislator will look back on and be proud of. As will future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Michael Soukup, Ph.D.

National Park Service, Retired