



To: **Hon. Brian J. Feldman**
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **Senate Bill 983 – Hunting – Lead and Lead-Based Ammunition – Phase-Out**

Position: **Oppose**

Date: **2/27/2024**

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Maryland State Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

As the Senior Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic States for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), and as a generational Eastern Shore Native and a resident hunting and fishing license holder, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 983 (SB 983) – Hunting – Lead and Lead-Based Ammunition – Phase-Out. This bill will require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to create a lead ammunition phase-out plan in addition to an ammunition certifying process on or before December 31, 2026. The long-term effects of a statutory ban on lead hunting ammunition are extremely detrimental to conservation funding, which is directly funded and supported by hunters. Moreover, there is no shortage of proven-successful voluntary and incentive-based programs run by other states to encourage hunters to switch to lead alternatives that avoid these unintended, but foreseeable consequences. CSF strongly suggests that Maryland look instead to a similar program that could be managed by the DNR which would allow them to meet their management objectives without compromising their funding stream.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

When it comes to lead ammunition bans, the negative impact to hunter participation, and ultimately conservation funding, is one of the greatest concerns of CSF. As of 2023, there were 116,422 certified paid hunting license holders in Maryland that generated \$6,337,975 in hunting license sales and \$11,426,411 in USFWS Wildlife Restoration dollars, totaling more than \$17.7M in conservation dollars from hunting alone. Hunters are boots-on-the-ground conservationists that continue to provide the most efficient and cost-effective method of managing wildlife populations.

In the current market, non-lead ammunition is not sufficiently available and is more costly, which will likely prevent hunters from participating in a time-honored tradition that is a pillar of the state's culture. Additionally, like many states in the region, Maryland is continuing to see a steady increase in human-wildlife conflicts, particularly with White-tailed deer populations. The passage of SB 983 will ultimately eliminate sufficient opportunity for hunters to take game, as they will ultimately not be able to hunt if they cannot access non-lead ammo. This unintended, but foreseeable consequence of the proposed lead ammunition ban will ultimately result in the legislature creating a new barrier for hunters to keep wildlife populations such as White-tailed deer within acceptable biological and social carrying capacities.

Creating this participation barrier harms more than just Maryland's sportsmen and women and the wildlife that will no longer be properly managed through hunting; it also has significant negative financial impact on both the DNR and the state's economy. As noted above, Maryland's DNR receives significant funding through the unique "user pays – public benefits" structure of the American System of Conservation Funding¹. Sportsmen and women support wildlife management through purchasing sporting licenses, as well as a manufacturer-level excise tax that is levied on outdoor goods such as firearms and ammunition (Pittman-Robertson). Because non-lead ammunition is not sufficiently available to hunters in the current marketplace or for all hunting calibers, phasing out lead ammunition will ultimately lead to fewer sales of hunting licenses, and consequently the DNR will have less money to manage the state's wildlife resources.

Upon request, CSF is more than willing to provide this body and the DNR, years of documented evidence from existing voluntary and incentive-based programs. Management objectives to address localized concerns with the use of lead ammo can be addressed effectively, and in a manner that does not create the wide-spread and foreseeable unintended consequence of hurting all conservation efforts in the state through decreasing conservation funding. CSF encourages the legislature to work with the DNR to develop and implement such a program should science support the need.

In closing, CSF encourages the legislature and the Department of Natural Resources to work together to implement incentive-based programs for the use of non-lead hunting ammunition by hunters if there exists demonstrable scientific evidence that such an effort is needed to address population-level impacts of lead exposure in specific wildlife species. CSF further recommends that such a program be developed and tested prior to any further consideration of a statutory ban on lead ammunition with its attendant and consequential diminishment of conservation funding. For these reasons, we respectfully request an unfavorable report on SB 983.

Sincerely,



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¹ [American System of Conservation Funding \(ASCF\)](#)