



April 10, 2026

Committee on Agriculture
Vermont State Senate
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Dear Chair Ingalls and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture,

On behalf of the Parkinson's Foundation, I write **in strong support of H.739, An act relating to prohibiting the use and sale of the herbicide paraquat.**

The Parkinson's Foundation makes life better for people with PD by improving care and advancing research toward a cure. In everything we do, we build on the energy, experience and passion of our global Parkinson's community. In Vermont, the Foundation's New England Chapter connects people with Parkinson's and their care partners to local resources, support groups, classes and educational programs. We also partner with dedicated volunteers across the state — one of whom you will hear from in this letter. Nationally, the Foundation offers a multitude of resources and tools, including a toll-free, bilingual Helpline for people with Parkinson's, their families, their friends and healthcare professionals to connect with a PD information specialist.

The Foundation is also working to create a world where fewer people develop PD — this starts with prevention, and H.739 is a critical step in this direction.

Parkinson's is the fastest-growing neurodegenerative disease, with more than 1.1 million Americans living with PD and 90,000 new people diagnosed each year. Most experts agree that PD is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors, including chemicals and toxins. One chemical that has been clearly linked to increasing a person's risk of developing PD is paraquat, which is one reason why it has been banned in more than 70 countries, including the European Union and China. Despite strong evidence of paraquat's harms and the existence of alternatives, U.S. regulators continue to allow use of this toxic chemical, which is often manufactured in countries that *don't* allow its use within their own borders. Groups like veterans and farmers are more likely to be exposed to paraquat and other environmental risk factors due to their jobs.

In Vermont, 2,300 people are estimated to have PD as of 2024. One of those people is Ron McConnell, who lives with his wife Amy in Vergennes. Ron shares:

In 2017, a workplace toxic exposure changed the course of our lives.

The diagnosis that followed — Parkinson's disease — didn't arrive all at once. It came on slowly, the way these things do. Years of something wrong before you have a name for it.



Today, Amy helps me with things I once did without thinking. That is what toxic exposure costs a person — and everyone who cares for them.

Ours is not an isolated story. Research shows that exposure to paraquat significantly increases the risk of developing Parkinson's disease. Between 73% and 90% of cases have no known genetic explanation. Environmental risk factors play a role — and paraquat is one we have the power to address.

The Parkinson's Foundation strongly supports efforts to ban paraquat nationally. Given the slower pace of federal action and the well-documented harms of this chemical, several states are considering banning or restricting the use of paraquat to protect residents. I urge you to put the health of Vermont's residents first by passing H.739. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andi Lipstein Fristedt
Executive Vice President, Chief Strategy & Public Policy Officer
Parkinson's Foundation