



Friday, April 3, 2026

Vermont Senate Committee on Agriculture

H.739 – An act relating to prohibiting the use and sale of the herbicide paraquat (SUPPORT)

Good morning, Chair Ingalls, Vice Chair Major and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on **H. 739**, which would prohibit the use and sale of the herbicide paraquat in Vermont.

My name is Zach Hardy, Senior State Government Relations Manager for The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. Founded in 2000, the Foundation is the world's largest nonprofit funder of Parkinson's research, with over \$2.5 billion in research programs worldwide. Our goal is to accelerate breakthroughs in diagnostics and treatments, and ultimately, find a cure for this disease.

Parkinson's is a progressive disease that impacts movement and can cause tremor, slowness, stiffness and walking and balance problems. Other non-movement symptoms, such as depression and issues with memory, can also be part of a person's experience with Parkinson's.

More than 1.2 million people in the United States are currently living with Parkinson's¹, with approximately 90,000 new diagnoses each year, making this disease the fastest-growing neurological condition in our country and globally.²

While the cause of Parkinson's has genetic components, environmental exposures play a significant role in disease risk. And among those environmental factors, the science linking the use of paraquat to a significantly increased risk of developing Parkinson's disease is some of the most concerning and well-established.³

Paraquat is a toxic chemical that is used as an herbicide. Decades of research has shown that people who work with or live near areas where paraquat is applied have a higher risk of developing Parkinson's. Research has shown that individuals who handled paraquat were about twice as likely to develop the disease compared to those using other pesticides.⁴ This is not an abstract risk — it affects farmers, farm workers and families in rural communities across Vermont.

¹ The Lewin Group Inc. *Economic burden of Parkinson's and atypical parkinsonism in the United States*. Final report prepared for The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. Published February 17, 2026. Accessed April 1, 2026. https://www.michaeljfox.org/sites/default/files/media/document/Economic%20Burden%20of%20Parkinson%E2%80%99s%20and%20Atypical%20Parkinsonism%20in%20the%20United%20States_0.pdf

² Willis AW, Roberts E, Beck JC, et al; Parkinson's Foundation P4 Group. Incidence of Parkinson disease in North America. *npj Parkinsons Dis*. 2022;8:170. doi:10.1038/s41531-022-00410-y

³ Vaccari C, El Dib R, de Camargo JLV. Paraquat and Parkinson's disease: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Crit Rev Toxicol*. 2019;49(2):172-202. doi:10.1080/10937404.2019.1659197

⁴ Tanner CM, Kamel F, Ross GW, et al. Rotenone, paraquat, and Parkinson's disease. *Environ Health Perspect*. 2011;119(6):866-872. doi:10.1289/ehp.1002839

While paraquat continues to be used in the United States, much of the world has responded to the known public health risks that this pesticide poses. More than 70 countries, including the European Union, Brazil and Germany, have banned the use of paraquat.⁵ Many of these countries, such as China, manufacture paraquat and export it to the United States — all while banning its use in their own backyard.⁶

This reveals a stark reality: foreign governments protect their citizens from paraquat while profiting from its use here in the United States.

In Vermont, more than 2,600 people are currently living with Parkinson's. The direct and indirect costs, such as lost productivity, caregiving, disability and household expenses, are estimated to be more than \$120 million per year. An increase in Parkinson's prevalence represents a significant public health and economic risk to the state.

Failure to curb known environmental risk factors of Parkinson's will only allow for further exposure and an increase in the number of people inflicted with this disease.

With this bipartisan legislation, Vermont can lead on the issue of environmental risk factors and Parkinson's disease. The scientific evidence is strong, and the risks are well documented, while the human cost of inaction continues to grow.

On behalf of The Michael J. Fox Foundation and the resilient Parkinson's community we are proud to work with, I strongly urge the members of this committee to support H. 739 and further safeguard the health of Vermonters.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.

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⁵ Gillam C. EPA delays decision on paraquat, a pesticide linked to Parkinson's. *Washington Post*. January 22, 2025. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2025/01/22/paraquat-epa-pesticide-parkinsons/>

⁶ Gillam C. Paraquat imports climb despite concerns about health impacts. *The New Lede*. October 21, 2025. <https://www.thenewlede.org/2025/10/paraquat-imports-climb-despite-concerns-about-health-impacts/>