



January 26, 2022

The Honorable R. Lee Ware, Chairman
House Agriculture, Chesapeake & Natural Resources Committee
Pocahontas Building, Room E308
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

RE: H.B. 1089 – Paraquat Transparency Legislation (SUPPORT)

Dear Chairman Ware and members of the committee,

The Michael J. Fox Foundation supports efforts to reduce the use of toxic agricultural chemicals in favor of more environmentally sound alternatives that pose a lower risk to human health. One example of a harmful pesticide used across the United States, and in Virginia, that greatly increases one's risk of developing Parkinson's Disease (PD) is paraquat dichloride (paraquat). **H.B. 1089 is a step in the right direction towards educating the public on the harmful effects of paraquat and beneficial for the state to retain information on the locations across the state where paraquat is being used.**

Paraquat is a pesticide that is banned in 50 countries because of its acute toxicity which causes death and organ failure through inhalation, consumption, or skin absorption. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "one small sip can be fatal and there is no antidote."¹ China and the European Union have independently banned the chemical from used despite being manufactured in country.

Paraquat is used as an alternative for killing weeds that are resistant to glyphosate, an herbicide sold under the brand name, Roundup. Paraquat usage is increasing due to increased glyphosate-resistant weeds in the food system and high-profile glyphosate-related lawsuits.² Paraquat is currently regulated as a restricted use pesticide in Virginia, though the extent of use is unknown without this legislation.³

Paraquat and Parkinson's Disease

Studies have found that subjects living near paraquat treated fields had a much higher rate of Parkinson's Disease than other subjects in the region, and the disease was diagnosed at a much younger age.^{4,5} Risk further increased through indirect exposure to the chemical through air or clothing-borne drift.

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/paraquat-dichloride-one-sip-can-kill>

² <https://emergency.cdc.gov/agent/paraquat/basics/facts.asp>

³ <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticide-virginia-pesticide-laws-and-regulations.shtml>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5433017/>

⁵ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19270050/>

Parkinson's Disease is a chronic and progressive neurodegenerative brain disorder that is caused by a loss of neurons and the dopamine neurotransmitter they produce. There is currently no therapy to slow, stop, or reverse the progression. And there is no cure.⁶

H.B. 1089 increases transparency by providing information to the public about the toxicity of paraquat. Enhancing the accountability of government regulation by making regulatory standards more visible to the public.

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research supports the passage of H.B. 1089. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at, 202-638-4101, ext. 441 or jworcester@michaeljfox.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julia Worcester".

Julia Worcester, JD
Director of State Government Relations

⁶ <https://www.michaeljfox.org/our-promise>