



The Honorable Alfonso Lopez

Chairman

Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee

General Assembly Building 201 North 9th Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219

Room 1014

SUPPORT HB 1375 – BAN ON PARAQUAT

Dear Chairman Lopez,

We, the undersigned organizations, write in strong support of **HB 1375**, legislation that would ban the use of paraquat in Virginia. This bill is a vital step toward protecting public health, safeguarding our agricultural communities, and aligning the Commonwealth with global best practices.

Paraquat is a highly toxic herbicide. The human cost of paraquat is severe. Peer-reviewed research shows that exposure to paraquat, particularly when sprayed within 500 meters of homes or workplaces, **more than doubles a person’s risk of developing Parkinson’s disease**¹—a progressive, incurable neurological disorder. More recent research has built upon and strengthened these findings.² Even small, chronic exposures—through air drift or contaminated dust—can accumulate and pose significant health risks.

The connection between paraquat and Parkinson’s disease is no longer speculative. Numerous scientific studies, including those supported by the National Institutes of Health, have established a clear and alarming link. Additionally, paraquat has been associated with **thyroid disease, kidney damage, childhood leukemia, and non-Hodgkin**

¹ See Tanner CM et al., *NIH study finds two pesticides associated with Parkinson’s disease*, National Institute of Health, (Friday, February 11, 2011) (<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-study-finds-two-pesticides-associated-parkinsons-disease>) (last visited May 9, 2025).

² Paul K.C., Cockburn M. Gong Y., et al, Agricultural paraquat dichloride use and Parkinson’s disease in California’s Central Valley. *Int J Epidemiol.* 2024 Feb 1;53(1):dyae004. (<https://academic.oup.com/ije/article/53/1/dyae004/7597790?login=false>)

lymphoma³—all of which place a significant burden on individuals, families, and our health care system.

Despite its toxicity, paraquat continues to be applied on crops like soybeans and corn using methods that heighten the risk of exposure, such as aerial spraying and ground application without buffer zones. Safer, effective weed management alternatives are available, and many farmers have already transitioned away from paraquat voluntarily. Banning its use in Virginia would accelerate this shift and prioritize the health of rural residents, agricultural workers, and neighboring communities.

Notably, **over 70 countries have banned paraquat**⁴, including China, Brazil, and the European Union. In 2007, the European Union banned paraquat after a court found scientific evidence linking exposure to Parkinson's.

It is long past time for Virginia to take similar action and ensure rural and agricultural communities are not exposed to a toxic chemical that other nations have deemed too dangerous to allow. Federal data shows that farmers here in America already produce cotton, soybeans, apples and other major crops without paraquat. Countries that have banned paraquat are among the largest producers in the world of cotton, apples, peanuts and other crops.

HB 1375 reflects a science-based, commonsense approach to public health and environmental stewardship. One that is needed as the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) has failed to act. We urge you to support this critical legislation and help protect Virginians from needless and preventable harm.

Sincerely,

Environmental Working Group
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
Parkinson's Foundation
Brian Grant Foundation
Power Over Parkinson's
Virginia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
PD Avengers
Centro de Apoyo Familiar (CAF)
Northern Virginia Bird Alliance
Mamavation
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Re:wild Your Campus
Center for Biological Diversity
Lynnhaven River NOW (LRNow)
Food & Water Watch
Center for Environmental Health
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore, CBES
Central Virginia Farm Workers Initiative/La Iniciativa
Virginia Memory Project

³ See INSERM Collective Expertise Center, *Effects of pesticides on health: New data*, Montrouge (FR): EDP Sciences (2022) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK581468/>) (last visited May 9, 2025).

⁴ Public Interest Research Group, *This toxic pesticide is banned in 70 countries, but still legal in America*, (Dec. 19, 2024) (<https://pirg.org/articles/this-toxic-pesticide-is-banned-in-70-countries-but-still-legal-in-america/>) (last visited May 9, 2025).