

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 8, 2024

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Mail Stop 1301A
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

We write to express our grave concern regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) approval of Paraquat in the United States and request the EPA ban the use of this dangerous herbicide.¹ Paraquat is currently used to clear fields before planting, but the chemical can stay in soil for years before breaking down. Paraquat is susceptible to spray drift, harming people, animals, plants, and property. Paraquat is a toxic substance linked to life threatening diseases and grave impacts on the environment—it has been banned in dozens of countries and should be banned in the United States.

Paraquat is dangerous through any route of exposure. If it touches the skin, this herbicide can cause severe rashes, scabbing, and lesions.² Inhalation of Paraquat can cause coughing, chest tightness, and lung scarring.³ Additionally, numerous studies have found that Paraquat causes serious health risks for workers who use the substance as well as the surrounding communities. These health risks include a higher risk of Parkinson's disease, with some studies finding a 64% increase in the likelihood of developing Parkinson's,⁴ non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma,⁵ thyroid cancer,⁶ and other thyroid issues.⁷

¹<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/02/01/2024-01950/epa-document-in-support-of-the-paraquat-interim-registration-review-decision-notice-of-availability>

² Britton, W., Morton, T., Wray, A. (2019, June 26). Paraquat Dichloride: Draft Human Health Risk Assessment in Support of Registration Review. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi/P100YEHL.PDF?Dockey=P100YEHL.PDF

³ Facts about Paraquat. (2019, May 16). Emergency Preparedness and Response; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. emergency.cdc.gov/agent/paraquat/basics/facts.asp

⁴ Tangamornsuksan W, Lohitnavy O, Sruamsiri R, Chaiyakunapruk N, Norman Scholfield C, Reisfeld B, Lohitnavy M. Paraquat exposure and Parkinson's disease: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Arch Environ Occup Health*. 2019;74(5):225-238. doi: 10.1080/19338244.2018.1492894. Epub 2018 Nov 25. Erratum in: *Arch Environ Occup Health*. 2019;74(5):292-293. doi: 10.1080/19338244.2018.1558737. PMID: 30474499.

⁵ Park SK, Kang D, Beane-Freeman L, Blair A, Hoppin JA, Sandler DP, Lynch CF, Knott C, Gwak J, Alavanja M. Cancer incidence among paraquat exposed applicators in the agricultural health study: prospective cohort study. *Int J Occup Environ Health*. 2009 Jul-Sep;15(3):274-81. doi: 10.1179/oeht.2009.15.3.274. PMID: 19650582; PMCID: PMC3058830.

⁶ Negar Omidakhsh, Julia E Heck, Myles Cockburn, Chenxiao Ling, Jerome M Hershman, Avital Harari, Thyroid Cancer and Pesticide Use in a Central California Agricultural Area: A Case Control Study, *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, Volume 107, Issue 9, September 2022, Pages e3574–e3582, <https://doi.org/10.1210/clinem/dgac413>

⁷ Researchers examine link between pesticides and thyroid cancer risk in Central California area. (2022, August 18). UCLA Health. <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/release/researchers-examine-link-between-pesticides-and-thyroid#:~:text=E2%80%9COur%20research%20suggests%20several%20novel,associated%20with%20thyroid%20cancer%20risk.%E2%80%9Dhttps://www.uclahealth.org/news/release/researchers-examine-link-between-pesticides-and-thyroid>

Due to their heightened exposure to Paraquat, farmworkers and rural residents are hardest hit by the harmful health effects of Paraquat like Parkinson's. Findings from researchers at UCLA⁸ found that Paraquat sprayed within 500 meters of where people live and work can more than double a person's odds of developing Parkinson's disease. The communities most affected by health pollutants are often Environmental Justice (EJ) communities.⁹ California provides a sobering example of the environmental justice impacts of Paraquat. One Environmental Working Group study found that 66% of all Paraquat use was in five majority Latino counties and 65% of applications occurred in low-income areas.¹⁰ Currently, the EPA has banned the use of Paraquat for certain areas like golf courses and recreational parks. We should expand this ban to protect those who are at high risk because of the use of this dangerous herbicide.

In addition to posing serious health concerns, studies have found that Paraquat can harm the environment. One 2021 article found that Paraquat can increase soil and water pollution. The residues of Paraquat are becoming increasingly common in soil due to its widespread use and long half-life.¹¹ This residue can enter the food chain,¹² and long-term exposure to Paraquat is known to cause harmful chemical buildup in humans and animals.¹³

Due to the significant human health and environmental concerns associated with Paraquat, roughly 70 countries have banned or discontinued the use of Paraquat, including China, Brazil, the European Union¹⁴, and Canada.¹⁵ We urge the EPA to change course and deliver critical protections for farmworkers, agricultural communities, and the environment by banning Paraquat.

Sincerely,

⁸ Kimberly C Paul, Myles Cockburn, Yufan Gong, Jeff Bronstein, Beate Ritz, Agricultural paraquat dichloride use and Parkinson's disease in California's Central Valley, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Volume 53, Issue 1, February 2024, dyae004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyae004>

⁹ Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool. (n.d.). Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#7.96/35.321/-119.995>

¹⁰ Rabine, Al. 2024. "Paraquat disproportionately threatens California's low-income Latino communities". Environmental Working Group. https://www.ewg.org/research/paraquat-disproportionately-threatens-californias-low-income-latino-communities?auHash=CNs5Wx_D3S18qmxtr7joL2xiTkYjsJSvISbm8HxM5t8

¹¹ Konthonbut, Pajaree, Pornpimol Kongtip, Noppanun Nankongnab, Mathuros Tipayamongkhogul, Witaya Yoosook, and Susan Woskie. 2018. "Paraquat Exposure of Pregnant Women and Neonates in Agricultural Areas in Thailand" *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15, no. 6: 1163. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15061163>

¹² Li, A., Wang, Y., He, Y., Liu, B., Iqbal, M., Mehmood, K., Jamil, T., Chang, Y., Hu, L., Li, Y., Guo, J., Pan, J., Tang, Z., & Zhang, H. (2021). Environmental fluoride exposure disrupts the intestinal structure and gut microbial composition in ducks. *Chemosphere*, 277, 130222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chemosphere.2021.130222>


¹³ Rashidipour, M., Maleki, A., Kordi, S., Birjandi, M., Pajouhi, N., Mohammadi, E., Heydari, R., Rezaee, R., Rasoulia, B., & Davari, B. (2019). Pectin/Chitosan/Tripolyphosphate nanoparticles: efficient carriers for reducing soil sorption, cytotoxicity, and mutagenicity of paraquat and enhancing its herbicide activity. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, 67(20), 5736–5745. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.jafc.9b01106>

¹⁴ Smith, H. (2024, April 26). California moves to ban use of the weedkiller paraquat - Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2024-04-08/california-moves-to-ban-use-of-the-weedkiller-paraquat>

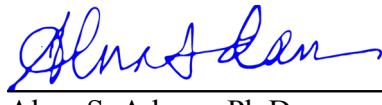
¹⁵ Parkinson Canada. 2023. "Discontinuation of paraquat product in Canada". <https://www.parkinson.ca/discontinuation-of-paraquat-product-in-canada/>



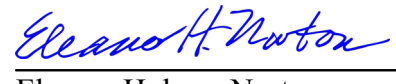
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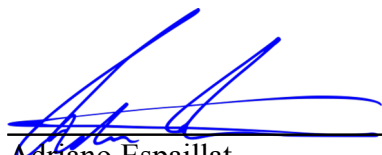
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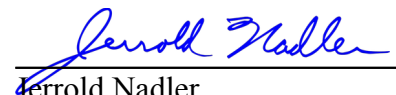
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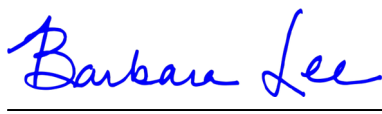
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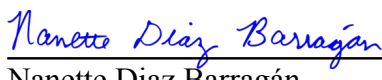
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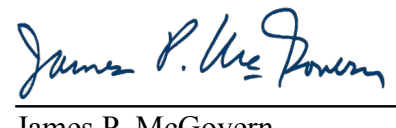
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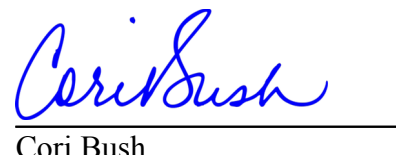
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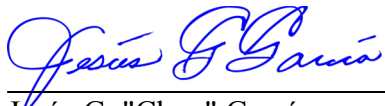
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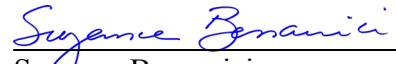
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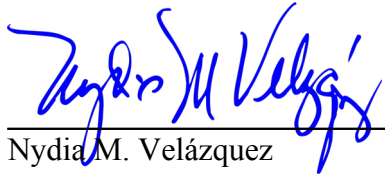
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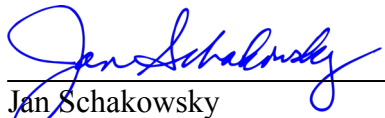
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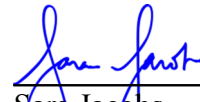
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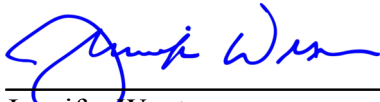
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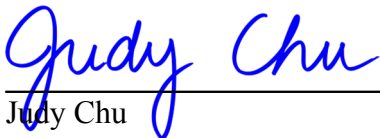
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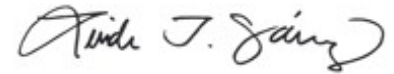
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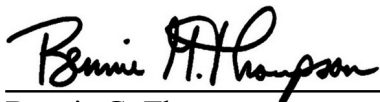
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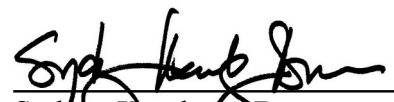
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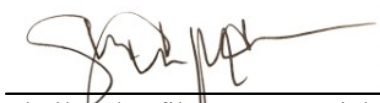
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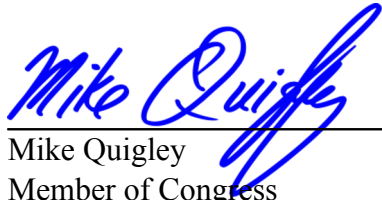
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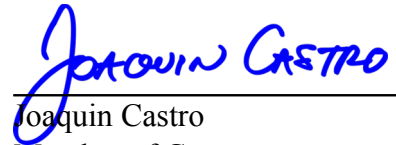
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