

STATE SENATOR • JOHN J. GLEASON • 27TH DISTRICT

Gleason Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 21, 2007

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Senator Gleason, Representative Jones Introduce Bills to Expand Access to Flu Vaccine for Seniors

New Legislation Would Require Hospitals to Offer Flu Vaccine for All Admitted Patients 65 or Older

LANSING—Senator John Gleason (D-Flushing) and Representative Robert Jones (D-Kalamazoo) are hoping to head off flu season at the pass and protect Michigan’s most vulnerable residents with new legislation that will require hospitals to offer the flu vaccine to any patient 65 years of age or older that is admitted for more than twenty-four hours. The legislation, Senate Bill 800, was filed with the Senate yesterday, September 20th, and should be introduced at the Senate’s next session, tentatively scheduled for Sunday evening. Rep. Jones’ companion bill is House Bill 5259.

“With Michigan winters comes the threat of flu, and this legislation will make sure that as many at-risk people as possible are vaccinated,” said Sen. Gleason. “What better way to administer vaccinations than to the people who are already right there at the hospital.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every year in the United States, an average of 5 percent to 20 percent of the population gets the flu, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and about 36,000 people die from flu. More than 90 percent of those deaths are among seniors. Even though last year's flu season was mild, 68 deaths among children were reported to CDC.

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) is gearing up for the 2007-2008 influenza season by making special efforts to reach out to high-risk patients as well as children in need of a second dose of influenza vaccine. Vaccine manufacturers expect shipments to be made on-time this year and MDCH is urging providers, local health departments, and community vaccinators to begin vaccinating patients.

“As the 2007-2008 flu season approaches, we encourage all of Michigan's residents to be vaccinated against the flu,” said Janet Olszewski, MDCH Director. “Ask your doctor if you are at high-risk for influenza-related complications and be sure to get vaccinated. If you are a new parent, a health care professional, and/or have contact with people age 65 and older, protect those high-risk individuals by getting vaccinated.”

“The Michigan Department of Community Health is proactively getting out in front of flu season and making every effort to make sure Michigan residents get vaccinated,” said Rep. Jones. “This

legislation should help cover a sizable portion of the population that need the vaccine the most.”

Studies show that people with the flu can infect others up to 1 day before they start having symptoms and, once sick, they can infect others for up to 5 days. About half of all people with influenza infections do not have any symptoms; these people can infect others without knowing they are sick.

Influenza activity most often occurs in January or later. Therefore, it is important to know that if you do not get vaccinated in October or November, you can still get vaccinated in December or later. Though it varies, flu season can last until May. For information on receiving the flu vaccine, please contact your doctor's office or your local health department.

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