

STATE SENATOR • JOHN J. GLEASON • 27<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

# Gleason Press Release

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## **Senate Passes Gleason Legislation to License Body Art Facilities, Expand Pool of Blood Donors**

*Red Cross, Tattoo Parlor Owners and Community Health Officials Endorse Efforts to Improve Tattoo and Piercing Environment*

LANSING—The Michigan Senate voted unanimously Wednesday to pass Senate Bill 593, legislation sponsored by Sen. John Gleason (D-Flushing) that will license all body art facilities in the state. The bill will require all tattooing to be conducted at a tattoo facility licensed by the Michigan Department of Community Health and annually inspected by their local health department.

A 2006 study done by the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology found that 24% of Americans between 18 and 50 are tattooed, and that 36% of Americans age 18 to 29 have at least one tattoo. With the tremendous increase in the number of individuals obtaining the services of body artists to perform tattooing, as well as branding and body-piercing, there is an increased need to assure the safety of Michigan residents and protect them from unsafe practices and the risk of transmission of blood-borne diseases.

“Twenty years ago, it was more common to see body piercing and branding on National Geographic or at a carnival sideshow than on the kid next door,” said Sen. Gleason. “But brandings, piercings and tattoos are becoming more common forms of adornment and expression, and we need to update our health policies and regulations accordingly. Licensing the facilities that perform them is a major part of keeping people healthy.”

The Red Cross has been a strong proponent of this legislation because there is currently a one-year deferment period required under federal rules for potential blood donors who have received body art. The Red Cross experiences a loss of up to 50% of potential college donors who are turned away due to the one-year deferral period. This legislation would solve this problem and in turn create a greater pool of blood donors by exempting donors who provide proof of body art being received by a state licensed facility. This exemption will greatly enhance the blood supply due to the fact that one of the greatest pools of donors are in the same age as those who predominantly obtain body art—from age 18 to their mid-20s.

“Most young people know that they help others by donating blood,” said Sharon Jaksa, CEO of the Great Lakes Region of the American Red Cross. “We host a large number of college and high school blood drives around the state, but too many of our potential donors are being turned away due to the one year deferral period for body art. We support this legislation because it will

help the Red Cross meet the needs of hospital patients across Michigan.”

“I think yesterday’s unanimous vote is a true testament to the value of this legislation, especially in midst of very tense, adversarial budget negotiations,” Gleason said. “Saving lives, both in preventing unhealthy practices at body art facilities and by increasing the amount of blood donors in Michigan something we can all agree on.”

This legislation also benefits established and reputable body art studios by holding all facilities to proper health requirements and precautions and seeking to deter makeshift or unofficial establishments. It is supported by the American Red Cross, Great Lakes Blood Region, Michigan Association for Public Health, Michigan Association of Counties, Health Educators, Inc., Splash of Color Tattoo and Piercing Studio in East Lansing, Michigan Department of Community Health and the Genesee County Health Department. The bill has moved to the Michigan House of Representatives and been referred to the House Committee on Health Policy.

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