

STATE SENATOR • JOHN J. GLEASON • 27TH DISTRICT

Gleason Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 19, 2007

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Senator Gleason, Health Officials and Tattoo Artists Share Vision for Safe Future of Industry

New Law Will Regulate and License Body Art Facilities to Increase Safety and Alleviate Health Risks

FLINT—Senator John Gleason (D-Flushing) was joined today by representatives from the Genesee County Health Department, American Red Cross, Health Educators, Inc. and the tattoo industry to discuss the impact and positive effects a new law to license and regulate body art facilities. The legislation, Senate Bill 593, was sponsored by Sen. Gleason and was signed into law by Governor Granholm last Thursday. 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.

“Just as there’s a level of reassurance and trust in going to a licensed accountant, plumber or physician, people in Michigan will now be able to get body art knowing that the artists and studios are being held to the highest health and sterilization standards,” Sen. Gleason said. “Body artists support this too as they understand their cleanliness standards are as important to their reputation as their artistic talent.”

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.

“As more Michigan residents seek tattoos and body piercings, the greater the likelihood for contamination and spread of disease,” said Bobby Pestronk, MPH, Health Officer, Genesee County Health Department. “This law will ensure every legitimate facility in the state is inspected, reviewed and licensed by a local health department on a regular basis. We’ll need Michigan’s residents to seek body art and piercings only from licensed facilities in order to reduce injury, too.”

“This law not only protects people getting tattoos and body piercings, it also benefits established and reputable body art studios by holding all facilities to the proper health requirements and precautions and seeking to deter makeshift or unofficial establishments,” said Kris Lachance, of Health Educators Inc. and owner of Splash of Color Tattoo & Piercing Studio in East Lansing.

“Rebellion and recklessness are not the same thing, and no one should be putting their life at risk simply because they choose to be tattooed or pierced.”

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.

“Thousands of young women and men here in Michigan donate blood to help hospital patients all over the state,” says Sharon Jaksa, CEO of the American Red Cross Great Lakes Region Blood Services. “But any of them who have had body art or tattoos in the past year were prevented from donating because of the possibility of infection. These young people are the next generation of blood donors, and it is extremely important that we not lose their support of the blood supply. We thank Sen. Gleason for recognizing the importance of retaining these young men and women as blood donors and really pushing the idea into law.”

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