

Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health
In Support of Raised Bill No. 6590: An Act Concerning Licensing of Tattoo Technicians
To the Distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee
March 20, 2013

Good afternoon, Distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Karen Spargo and I am the President of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH) and the Director of the Naugatuck Valley Health District, serving the towns of Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Seymour, and Shelton.

CADH supports *Raised Bill No. 6590: An Act Concerning Licensing of Tattoo Technicians*. Tattoo artists perform high-risk, invasive procedures with increasing popularity¹ on a public that is largely unaware that—though their hairdressers, massage therapists, and acupuncturists are licensed or otherwise regulated by the Department of Public Health—tattoo artists are not.

Health risks of tattooing include potential transmission of bloodborne diseases—including HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C—if any tattoo instruments contaminated with blood are used inappropriately between clients.² Cross-contamination can also result in skin infections, causing redness, swelling, pain and a pus-like drainage. Skin infections caused by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* can be particularly dangerous. Additional risks include allergic reactions, granulomas (bumps that form around the ink), keloid formation (raised areas caused by an overgrowth of scar tissue), and MRI complications (swelling or burning in affected areas during an MRI scan).^{3,4}

Risks to both tattoo recipients and tattoo artists can be minimized significantly if tattoo artists are knowledgeable about and in fact adhere to certain standards, including how to properly use, care for and sterilize the tattoo equipment they operate; how to apply bloodborne pathogen standards to procedures that cause the presence of blood through the puncturing of the skin; and how to respond appropriately to allergic reactions when dealing with injecting dyes.

Current Connecticut law⁵ is inadequate to protect the public from the risks associated with tattooing, relying too heavily on assumed medical knowledge and supervision by a physician who may or may not have actually visited the establishment being regulated. In response, many municipalities have established local ordinances regulating tattoo establishments. This fragmented approach means repeated and unnecessary investments by localities in attempting to address a preventable public health threat, better confronted by a standardized approach. Fiscal considerations for the Department of Public Health to implement Raised Bill 6590, if passed, could be overcome by (1) using the funds collected from licensure activities to balance the cost of oversight, and (2) leveraging the considerable research already done in other states and at the local level in Connecticut to draft regulations—and provide some desperately needed uniformity. Local health directors welcome the opportunity to be a partner in drafting such regulations.

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Good afternoon, Distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Karen Spargo and I am the President of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH) and the Director of the Naugatuck Valley Health District, serving the towns of Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Seymour, and Shelton.

CADH supports *Raised Bill No. 6590: An Act Concerning Licensing of Tattoo Technicians*. Tattoo artists perform high-risk, invasive procedures with increasing popularity¹ on a public that is largely unaware that—though their hairdressers, massage therapists, and acupuncturists are licensed or otherwise regulated by the Department of Public Health—tattoo artists are not.

Health risks of tattooing include potential transmission of bloodborne diseases—including HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C—if any tattoo instruments contaminated with blood are used inappropriately between clients.² Cross-contamination can also result in skin infections, causing redness, swelling, pain and a pus-like drainage. Skin infections caused by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* can be particularly dangerous. Additional risks include allergic reactions, granulomas (bumps that form around the ink), keloid formation (raised areas caused by an overgrowth of scar tissue), and MRI complications (swelling or burning in affected areas during an MRI scan).^{3,4}

Risks to both tattoo recipients and tattoo artists can be minimized significantly if tattoo artists are knowledgeable about and in fact adhere to certain standards, including how to properly use, care for and sterilize the tattoo equipment they operate; how to apply bloodborne pathogen standards to procedures that cause the presence of blood through the puncturing of the skin; and how to respond appropriately to allergic reactions when dealing with injecting dyes.

Current Connecticut law⁵ is inadequate to protect the public from the risks associated with tattooing, relying too heavily on assumed medical knowledge and supervision by a physician who may or may not have actually visited the establishment being regulated. In response, many municipalities have established local ordinances regulating tattoo establishments. This fragmented approach means repeated and unnecessary investments by localities in attempting to address a preventable public health threat, better confronted by a standardized approach. Fiscal considerations for the Department of Public Health to implement Raised Bill 6590, if passed, could be overcome by (1) using the funds collected from licensure activities to balance the cost of oversight, and (2) leveraging the considerable research already done in other states and at the local level in Connecticut to draft regulations—and provide some desperately needed uniformity. Local health directors welcome the opportunity to be a partner in drafting such regulations.

Given the high-risk nature of tattooing, the public should expect that tattoo artists are subject to at least the same scrutiny as hairdressers. Accordingly, CADH supports Raised Bill 6590. CADH is a nonprofit organization comprised of Connecticut's 74 local health departments and districts. Local health directors are the statutory agents of the Commissioner of Public Health and are critical providers of essential public health services at the local level in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ According to one poll, 21% of Americans have a tattoo, up from 14% in 2008. Harris Interactive. *One in Five U.S. Adults Now Has a Tattoo*. <<http://www.harrisinteractive.com/NewsRoom/HarrisPolls/tabid/447/mid/1508/articleId/970/ctl/ReadCustom%20Default/Default.aspx>>. Accessed March 19, 2013.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Body Art*. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/body_art/default.html>. Accessed March 19, 2013.

³ Mayo Clinic Staff. *Tattoos: Understand risks and precautions*. <<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/tattoos-and-piercings/MC00020>>. Accessed March 19, 2013.

⁴ U.S. Food and Drug Administration. *Tattoos & Permanent Makeup*.

<<http://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/productandingredientsafety/productinformation/ucm108530.htm>>. Accessed March 19, 2013.

⁵ Section 19a-14 of the Connecticut General Statutes; Section 19a-92a-1 of the Public Health Code.

Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health
In Support of Raised Bill No. 6590: An Act Concerning Licensing of Tattoo Technicians
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