

Elder Pride Act

Endorsing Organizations: SAGE, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs, interACT, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, AIDS United, National Minority AIDS Council, National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors, and National Coalition of STD Directors
Co-leads: Congresswoman Bonamici, Congressman Pocan, and Congresswoman Davids

Based on 2020 Census data, 46 million people, or 14 percent of the United States population, live in rural areas. More than one in five older Americans live in rural areas, and national surveys suggest that between 2.9 million and 3.8 million LGBTQI+ people live in rural American communities, which constitutes up to 20 percent of the nation's LGBTQI+ population.

LGBTQI+ older adults require unique services and supports that are scarce and severely underfunded in every part of the country. Lack of resources for LGBTQI+ older adults is especially challenging, and little data exists on the experiences of LGBTQI+ older Americans in rural areas. For those who reside in areas that lack vital, LGBTQ+-affirming services, this under-resourcing can jeopardize their economic security, social support, and overall health and well-being.

Although many Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) would like to offer LGBTQI+ cultural competence training to their staff, they currently do not have the resources to develop these trainings and very few offer LGBTQI+-specific programs or outreach. Research shows higher rates of chronic disease among older adults living in rural settings compared to those living in urban settings, compounding the challenges faced by this community. Additionally, fewer than half of AAAs report they would be able to offer or fund LGBTQI+-specific services.

As the leading federal policy vehicle for funding and delivering services to older adults nationwide, the Older Americans Act (OAA) holds enormous potential for LGBTQI+ elders. **The Elder Pride Act** would improve OAA and bolster the capacity of rural AAAs to better support LGBTQI+ seniors. This bill would establish a rural grant program designed to fund programs that provide:

- cultural competency training for service providers;
- connections between LGBTQI+ older adults and local service providers and community organizations;
- expanded use of nondiscrimination policies and community spaces for older adults who are members of the LGBTQI+ community or another protected class;
- resources on sexual health and aging for senior service providers; and
- care or services to LGBTQI+ and seniors of other protected classes.

The Elder Pride Act would also prioritize serving seniors with the greatest social need and require reports from the Administration on Aging to secure transparency in the implementation of the grant program and improve availability of data on rural programming for LGBTQI+ seniors.