



Ruthie and Connie LGBTQ Elder Americans Act

Endorsing Organizations: *SAGE, Human Rights Campaign, National Minority AIDS Council, National Center for Lesbian Rights, Caring Across Generations, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, and National Center for Transgender Equality*

Co-leads: *Congressman Ted Deutch and Congressman Charlie Crist*

The number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) older adults is estimated to increase from 2.4 million to 3 million by 2030. As with other marginalized communities, LGBTQ+ older adults face significant barriers and profound disparities that put them in great social need. The available research shows that LGBTQ+ elders have fewer sources of support as compared to their heterosexual peers, face higher poverty rates, and experience poor health and health access. In addition, many enter the aging system with the harmful physical and emotional health effects of having lived through a lifetime of discrimination. Because of these profound challenges, LGBTQ+ older adults require unique services and supports that are scarce and severely underfunded in every part of the country. Many live in areas that lack vital, LGBTQ+-affirming services that can improve their economic security, social support, and overall health and well-being. Although many Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are willing to offer LGBTQ+ cultural competence training to their staff, very few offer LGBTQ+-specific programs or outreach. Further, less than half of AAAs report they would be able to offer or fund LGBTQ+-specific services. Overall, there is insufficient research on the needs of LGBTQ+ older people, the programs that could reduce these disparities, and whether aging providers are effectively serving this vulnerable population.

As the country's leading vehicle for funding and delivering services to older adults nationwide, the Older Americans Act (OAA) holds enormous potential for LGBTQ+ elders. Through the OAA, Congress can decrease the isolation faced by vulnerable and disadvantaged LGBTQ+ older adults, improve their health, and increase their access to culturally competent services and supports. This bill does the following to achieve those outcomes:

1. Includes LGBTQ+ older adults as a "vulnerable population" with greatest economic and social need;
2. Permanently establishes and continues to fund the National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging, the country's first and only technical assistance resource center aimed at improving the quality of services and supports offered to LGBTQ+ older adults. The National Resource Center on LGBTQ+ Aging will continue to provide critical information and tools on aging service providers, LGBTQ+ organizations, and LGBTQ+ older adults through: a comprehensive clearing house of online resources; a national in-person, cultural competence training program; and technical assistance that links service providers and older adults to available resources;
3. Requires the Assistant Secretary of Aging to oversee data collection on LGBTQ+ older adults and their service needs, mandates data collection and analysis on the effectiveness of the state agencies on aging and the AAAs in targeting services to LGBTQ+ older adults, and requires the state agencies to establish a reporting system to collect and analyze data on discrimination against LGBTQ+ older adults in long-term care facilities; and
4. Prioritizes research and development grants for organizations working to improve LGBTQ+ health, long-term care needs, and access to culturally responsive services.