

LGBT Elder Americans Act of 2012

As the number of Americans age 65 and older surges over the next few decades, the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older adults is estimated to double to 3 million by 2030. The available research shows that: LGBT elders have fewer sources of support compared to heterosexual individuals and therefore face higher poverty rates and experience poor health and health access. While many Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are willing to offer LGBT cultural competence training to their staff, very few offer LGBT-specific programs or outreach. Less than half report they would be able to offer or fund LGBT-specific services. Overall, there is insufficient research on the needs of LGBT older people, the programs that could reduce these disparities, and whether aging providers are effectively serving them. Lastly, long-term care ombudsmen are a vital part of the nation's aging network, assisting hundreds of thousands of individuals every year, yet they are not empowered to collect data on any discrimination they might discover, including complaints of discrimination by LGBT older adults. Because of these profound challenges, Senator Bennet introduced the LGBT Elder Americans Act of 2012 to ensure that LGBT elders receive the unique services and supports they need to improve their economic security, social support, and overall health and well-being by:

- Including LGBT older adults as a vulnerable population with the greatest economic and social need under OAA.
- Permanently establishing the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging, the country's first and only technical assistance resource center aimed at improving the quality of services and supports offered to LGBT adults. The National Resource Center on LGBT Aging will provide critical information and tools to aging service providers, LGBT organizations and LGBT older adults through: a comprehensive clearinghouse of online resources (lgbtagingcenter.org); a national in-person, cultural competence training program; and technical assistance that links service providers and older adults seeking help to available resources.
- Requiring the Assistant Secretary of Aging to oversee data collection on LGBT older adults and their service needs and mandates data collection and analysis on the effectiveness of the state agencies on aging and the AAAs in targeting services to LGBT older adults.
- Requiring long-term care ombudsmen to collect and analyze data relating to discrimination against LGBT older adults in long-term care settings.
- Prioritizing research and development grants for organizations working to improve LGBT health, long-term care needs and access to culturally responsive services.

This legislation is endorsed by key LGBT elder advocacy groups such as Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE).