

# **Inclusive Aging Act**

*Introduced by Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and Bob Casey (D-PA)*

## **Why do we need the Inclusive Aging Act?**

Through the Older Americans Act, the federal government has directed millions of dollars and significant resources to help address the needs of older Americans. Unfortunately, there is still limited investment in addressing sexual health care for older Americans and the diverse needs of older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender (LGBT) Americans.

Nationally, the focus on sexual health, and in particular on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, has centered on a younger population. However, almost half of people living with HIV in the United States are age 50 or older,<sup>1</sup> and the rate of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among individuals over the age of 65 is increasing.<sup>2</sup> Older Americans who identify as LGBT, especially those of color and those living in rural areas, face greater risks and additional barriers to prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.<sup>3</sup> Due to lifelong experiences of discrimination, LGBT seniors face unstable employment and lower earnings. These issues contribute to higher levels of poverty, with more than one-third of LGBT seniors living on incomes at or below about \$25,000 per year, or roughly 200% of the federal poverty level.<sup>4</sup> Older LGBT Americans, especially those living in rural areas, face greater rates of social isolation and increased health risks.<sup>5</sup>

Older Americans would benefit from additional services that are coordinated to improve access to sexual health care services. At the same time, connecting LGBT seniors with their local community and coordinating federal efforts around the needs of this population will increase LGBT seniors' access to essential services, enhancing their health and economic security.

## **What will the Inclusive Aging Act do?**

- **Establish the Office of Inclusivity and Sexual Health** in the Administration on Aging, which would support inclusive aging and sexual health care services for the older American population, facilitate data collection related to population needs, oversee funding opportunities, and promote policies to address the needs of LGBT seniors;
- **Designate older LGBT Americans as a population of 'Greatest Social Need'** under the Older Americans Act to help target local services to the needs of LGBT seniors;
- **Reauthorize the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging**, which provides training, support, and resources to providers, LGBT organizations, and LGBT seniors; and
- **Establish a rural grant program** designed to fund programs that provide (1) cultural competency training for health care providers, (2) resources on sexual health and aging for senior service providers, and (3) care or services to LGBT and minority seniors.

---

<sup>1</sup> AARP, "HIV, AIDS, and Older People," (2017) (available at <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/hiv-aids-and-older-people#older>)

<sup>2</sup> Athena Insight, "Patients over 60? Screen for STIs," (2018) (available at <https://www.athenahealth.com/insight/over-60-stis-may-not-be-done-you>)

<sup>3</sup> Lenny Bernstein, "This HIV pill saves lives. So why is it so hard to get in the Deep South?," The Washington Post, (2019) ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/this-hiv-pill-saves-lives-so-why-is-it-so-hard-to-get-in-the-deep-south/2019/03/11/a221a784-354a-11e9-854a-7a14d7fec96a\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.036f0571c66f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/this-hiv-pill-saves-lives-so-why-is-it-so-hard-to-get-in-the-deep-south/2019/03/11/a221a784-354a-11e9-854a-7a14d7fec96a_story.html?utm_term=.036f0571c66f))

<sup>4</sup> Movement Advancement Project and SAGE, "Understanding Issues Facing LGBT Older Adults," (2017) (available at <http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/understanding-issues-facing-lgbt-older-adults.pdf>)

<sup>5</sup> J. Whitehead, John Shaver and Rob Stephenson, "Outness, Stigma, and Primary Health Care Utilization among Rural LGBT Populations," *PLOS ONE*, Vol. 11(1), (2016) (available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4701471/pdf/pone.0146139.pdf>)