

# U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



**RANKING MEMBER** *Special Committee on Aging*

## **Elder Pride Act**

### **Why do we need the Elder Pride Act?**

Older Americans who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT) have confronted a lifetime of discrimination that continues as they age. Over the years, discrimination has contributed to unstable employment and lower earnings for many older LGBT Americans, and despite marriage equality, same-sex partners in many states can still be denied spousal benefits and employment protections. These factors have contributed to higher levels of poverty among older LGBT Americans, with more than one-third living on incomes at or below about \$24,000 per year, or roughly 200% of the federal poverty level.<sup>1</sup> Older LGBT Americans, especially those living in rural areas, face levels of discrimination at higher rates than their non-LGBT peers, which results in greater social isolation and increased health risks.<sup>2</sup>

While there are many federal programs designed to assist older adults, to date there is limited investment in the specific needs of older LGBT Americans. Older LGBT Americans would benefit from additional services that are coordinated to address social isolation, poverty and access to health care. Connecting LGBT seniors with their local community and coordinating federal efforts around the needs of this population will increase LGBT seniors' access to services, enhancing their health and economic security.

### **What will the Elder Pride Act do?**

The Elder Pride Act would establish a Federal Office of Older LGBT Policy within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to support older LGBT Americans. The Office would facilitate data collection on the older LGBT community, issue funding opportunities that would benefit older LGBT Americans and promote the adoption of policies across federal programs to help address the specific needs of older LGBT Americans.

One of the funding opportunities that the Office would administer is a grant program, also authorized by the legislation, to connect rural LGBT seniors with services and supports. The grant would:

- Support local organizations with education and training around community outreach to rural older LGBT individuals in order to reduce isolation and improve access to services;
- Provide funding to conduct cultural competency trainings for organizations and personnel providing services to older individuals in rural areas;
- Provide resources for senior service providers to conduct programs to connect LGBT seniors with their non-LGBT peers; and
- Help create and implement an outreach plan that will provide LGBT seniors with the resources to easily identify LGBT-friendly institutions and businesses.

For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Josh Dubensky with Senator Casey at [josh\\_dubensky@aging.senate.gov](mailto:josh_dubensky@aging.senate.gov).

<sup>1</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>2</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>)