



MA LGBT Aging Commission

Report to the Legislature

2019 - 2020

This is a report of the Massachusetts Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Aging (MA LGBT), as required by M.G.L. Chapter 3, Section 71.

Commission Activities: 2019

2019 is the five-year anniversary of the creation of the MA LGBT Aging Commission and 2020 is the five year anniversary of the Commission's Report that outlined a comprehensive review of Long Term Supports and Services, Public Health, Housing, Senior Centers and Social Engagement and Legislation impacting the lives of LGBT older adults and caregivers in Massachusetts.

To recognize this milestone, the Commission dedicated the year's quarterly meetings to hosting public listening sessions for LGBT older adults, caregivers, elder care providers, and LGBT community members. The intent was to provide the public with an update on the Commission's work of the past five years, and to learn more about what issues were of current importance to LGBT older adults, caregivers and elder care providers.

The LGBT Aging Commission hosted three regional public listening sessions:

Cape and Islands: June 2019 at the Barnstable Council on Aging

Co-chairs: Senator Becca Rausch and Representative Sarah Peake

Summary: Participants focused on unmet needs on the Cape and Islands, particularly regarding lack of public transportation and reliance on driving oneself or others. There was much discussion about lack of resources regarding grief, bereavement of loved ones and the need for local groups for both emotional and practical support. Local LGBT older adults very much engaged with the Orleans Council on Aging monthly supper club that hosts up to 70 guests monthly.

Berkshires: September 2019 at the Berkshire Athanaeum, Pittsfield

Co-chairs: Senator Pat Jehlen and Representative Tricia Farley- Bouvier

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Summary: Participants focused on geography: limited access to services and providers in general – most local primary care doctors are not taking new patients; there are long waits for any provider before looking at their capacity to be LGBT inclusive. There was much concern about limited public transportation (busses stop at 4:30pm). Rainbow Supper Club/Holyoke, Rainbow Elders/Greenfield and Rainbow Seniors of Berkshire County are monthly meals and social gatherings for LGBT older adults and caregivers.

Greater Boston: December 2019 at Fenway Health Center, Boston

Co-chairs: Senator Pat Jehlen and Representative Ruth Balser

Summary: Participants addressed the importance of the social determinants of health of LGBT older adults: inadequate housing, nutrition, and transportation, each of which is more complex with the intersection with ableism, ageism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, etc. Participants identified the need for required ongoing intersectional LGBT health training in order to be licensed. There was much discussion about HIV/AIDS and Aging and the lack of specialized resources and supports regarding health insurance and training for health care providers to better understand the lived experiences of long-term survivors.

Commission Activities: 2020

The year's first quarterly meeting was hosted at the State House in March, in the days leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine. The two subsequent quarterly meetings were held in June and September via Zoom.

The majority of the Commission's focus was directed to COVID response - how the elder care network was responding to the needs of older adults, specifically LGBT older adults and caregivers.

In lieu of the December quarterly meeting, the Commission's work groups convened to review the priority areas of Long Term Supports and Services, Public Health, Housing and Senior Centers and Social Engagement.

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2019 - 2020 Recommendations and Accomplishments:

Long Term Supports and Services

1. Training: LGBT Aging in MA online training module developed in 2019 and phased rollout began in 2020 while EOEA and OLTSS sought an accessible and equitable site to host training. Initial provisional efforts have occurred for some programs to begin utilizing the online training. Continued rollout in 2021.
2. Data Collection: Plan to re-evaluate and where appropriate revise Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) questions and expand them throughout the EOEA network of services.
3. Legislation: EOEA eligibility for people living with HIV/AIDS who are under age 60 but meet service eligibility. Refiling in 2021.

Public Health

1. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data Collection: In response to a recommendation of the Commission, DPH has finalized a set of data standards on the collection and reporting of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE), has added specific data variables to the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN), its integrated electronic disease surveillance system, and is developing an implementation guide to advance the addition of these variables to DPH surveys, surveillance systems, and research projects as well as to electronic health records and programmatic data systems to improve the state's ability to track the impact of various risk factors on the health of LGBT individuals, including LGBT elders.

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2. LGBT Aging 2025: Public Health Committee members from the Fenway Institute collaborated with Mass. Department of Public Health staff to analyze 2016-2018 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey data comparing LGBT people age 50-75 to straight, cisgender people age 50-75. They found important differences, such as higher rates of falling and being injured in the past year among LGBT older adults. Fenway Institute and LGBT Aging Project staff collaborated with the Mass. LGBT Aging Commission to convene in-person and virtual listening session across Massachusetts in 2019-2020 to understand priorities and experiences of LGBT older adults, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this research are published in “LGBT Aging 2025: Strategies for Achieving a Healthy and Thriving LGBT Older Adult Community in Massachusetts” (<https://fenwayhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Aging-2025-Report-December-2020.pdf>)

3. Goal for 2021: HIV prevention education for older adults.

Housing

1. LGBTQ Friendly Affordable Senior Housing to open in Hyde Park 2023.
2. Goal to develop LGBT cultural competency curriculum for housing management and staff.

Senior Centers/Community Engagement

1. Development of Virtual Senior Center for LGBT older adults – COVID-19 highlighted the need for increased technology access for older adults (internet access and hardware).
2. COAs and LGBT social groups have collaborated regionally and migrated to virtual platforms to keep LGBT older adults socially engaged during COVID pandemic.

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2019 – 2020 LGBT Aging Commission Members

1. House Chair of Joint Committee on Elder Affairs, Representative Ruth B. Balser, Co-Chair of the Commission
2. Senate Chair of Joint Committee on Elder Affairs, Senator Patricia Jehlen, Co-Chair of the Commission
3. Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA): Carole Malone, Assistant Secretary
4. Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD): Karen Bresnahan, Director of Administration and Policy
5. Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH): Kevin Cranston, Assistant Commissioner, Director of the Bureau of Infectious Disease & Laboratory Sciences
6. LGBT Aging Project: Lisa Krinsky, LICSW, Director
7. Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders: Chris Erchull, Esq., Staff Attorney
8. New England Association of HIV Over Fifty, Inc.: Lenny Alberts
9. MassEquality: Tanya Neslusan, Executive Director
10. Mass Home Care: Val Frias, Executive Director, ETHOS
11. AARP of Massachusetts: Barrie Atkin, Executive Council
12. Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging: David P. Stevens, Executive Director
13. Massachusetts Senior Care Association: William Bogdanovich, CNHA, President & CEO, Broad Reach Healthcare
14. Home Care Aide Council: Lisa Gurgone, MPA, Executive Director 3 Gubernatorial Appointments:
15. LGBT Public Policy Expert: Sean Cahill, PhD, Director of Health Policy Research, Fenway Institute
16. LGBT Elder Law Expert: Michelle LaPointe
17. Transgender Older Adult: [seat unfilled]
18. LGBT Older Adult representing Cape Cod: Paul Glass
19. LGBT Older Adult representing Western Massachusetts: Dave Gott