



Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging

2025-2030 Strategic Plan



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Executive Summary

The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging Strategic Plan 2025-2030 represents an expansive approach to improving the quality of life for LGBTQ older adults across the Commonwealth. This strategy emphasizes developing impactful state policies and programs, building inclusive partnerships with diverse stakeholders, participating in robust advocacy efforts, guaranteeing equitable access to comprehensive services, and nurturing a strong sense of community and belonging.

Between April 2024 and February 2025, the Commission conducted a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis, reviewed previous accomplishments and identified future goals and objectives. In addition to Commissioner input, the Commission held four listening sessions in communities across the Commonwealth that brought together LGBTQ older adults, caregivers, family members, and aging service providers. The Commission thoroughly explored, evaluated, and integrated both community voices and current research.

2025 Mission Statement

The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging enhances the quality of life for LGBTQ older adults in Massachusetts through state policy and program recommendations, collaborations, partnerships, and advocacy.

2025 Vision Statement

Massachusetts' LGBTQ older adults and caregivers will have equitable access to programs, services, benefits, social support, and community that maximize their quality of life and enable them to thrive as they age.

Nine Priority Areas:

- 1. Infrastructure for Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging**
- 2. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Lens for all Commission work**
- 3. Public Visibility and Advancement of Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging**
- 4. Statewide Needs Assessment of LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 5. Social Support and Community Engagement for LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 6. Affirming and Accessible Healthcare for LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 7. Safe and Affordable Housing for LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 8. Policy and Advocacy for LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 9. LGBTQ Cultural Competency Training**

Through these nine priority areas, the Commission aims to sustain and expand its advocacy and advancement efforts. The Commission’s 2025-2030 strategic plan is dedicated to establishing a future that is more inclusive and supportive for LGBTQ older adults and caregivers throughout the Commonwealth.



Introduction

Background of Commission

In response to a need for representation and advocacy efforts, in 2013, the Massachusetts state government created the Massachusetts Special Legislative Commission on LGBT Aging. This commission was the nation’s first statewide LGBT Aging Commission, working alongside the state legislature and then-Governor Deval Patrick to meet the needs of LGBT older adults. In 2015, the Commission moved from a “special” Commission to a permanent Commission and has received limited funding from the state government since 2022.

The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging¹ is chaired by the House and Senate Chairs of the Joint Committee on Aging and Independence. Members represent organizations such as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), the Massachusetts Executive Office of Aging and Independence (AGE), the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), LGBTQ and aging service networks as well as subject experts and LGBTQ older adults themselves. Each contributes unique expertise and viewpoints to address the needs of LGBTQ older adults. The varied membership ensures that the Commission can effectively confront the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ older adults in Massachusetts. A comprehensive list of Commission membership can be found at the end of this document.



Accomplishments

Since its inception, the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging has made significant strides in promoting the well-being and inclusivity of LGBTQ older adults. In 2018 Massachusetts enacted “An Act Relative to LGBT Awareness Training for Aging Service Providers” first in the nation legislation requiring LGBTQ cultural competency training for all providers within Massachusetts’ state network of older adult care. The Commission has also been instrumental in influencing policy changes to protect the rights of LGBTQ older adults. Some of these accomplishments include the addition of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) questions into AGE needs assessment forms, and the LGBTQI Long Term Care Bill of Rights included in Massachusetts 2024 Long Term Care

¹ The Commission’s name has since been updated to include the Q in the LGBT acronym.

legislation “An Act to improve quality and oversight of long-term care”. These policy advancements have not only improved the legal standing of LGBTQ older adults but have also set a precedent for other states to follow. Furthermore, the Commission has, and remains committed to, regularly bringing LGBTQ older adults across the Commonwealth together to hear directly about their priorities, challenges, and needs, and finding ways for the Commission to play a positive role in enacting needed change.



Demographics

The percentage of older adults identifying as LGBT+ has increased since the inception of the Commission. In 2013, some 3.0 percent of adults in Massachusetts aged 64-74 identified as homosexual, bisexual or other.^{2,3} Some 1.6 percent of adults aged 75 and older also identified this way. According to more recent data, 9.1 percent of all adults in Massachusetts identified as LGBT+ equating to roughly 514,000 individuals.⁴ According to this same survey data, some 4.0 percent of adults ages 65-74, and 3.1 percent of those aged 75 and older identify as LGBT+.⁵ Older LGBTQ adults frequently require an increased need for formal aging services, influenced by factors like lower parenting rates and estrangement from their families of origin. Nonetheless, fears of facing discriminatory treatment and LGBTQ culturally insensitive care might prevent them from accessing these services. In Massachusetts, 64% of people living with HIV are over the age of 50. This is a significantly higher percentage of older adults living with HIV than in other states and federally.⁶



Purpose of Report

This report presents the five year (2025-2030) strategic planning of the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging to improve the quality of life for older LGBTQ individuals. Older adults referred to in this plan are age 60 and older, unless otherwise noted. This strategy emphasizes the development of impactful state policies and programs, building inclusive partnerships with diverse stakeholders, participating in robust advocacy efforts, guaranteeing equitable access to comprehensive services, and nurturing a strong sense of community and belonging.

² These terms were used as response options on the 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey.

³ Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). A Profile of Health Among Massachusetts Adults, 2013 Results from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, pg. 43. Published October 2014. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/a-profile-of-health-among-massachusetts-adults-2013-0/download>

⁴ Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). Analysis of 2020-2022 Massachusetts Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data by Maria McKenna. March 2024.

⁵ While these percentages have increased, these percentages are likely still underestimates due to reluctance from older adults to identify as LGBTQ stemming from decades of exposure to stigma and discrimination.

⁶ Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences. (2024). Massachusetts HIV Epidemiologic Profile, Statewide Report – Data as of 1/1/2024. <https://www.mass.gov/lists/hiv-aids-epidemiologic-profiles>.

Strategic Planning Methodology

In 2024-2025, the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging developed a 5-year strategic plan to serve LGBTQ older adults, their families, and caregivers. To achieve this, the Commission formed a strategic planning subcommittee that convened from April 2024 - February 2025 to thoroughly explore current research, demographic trends, and emerging concerns. Commissioners performed a comprehensive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. Additionally, the Commission hosted listening sessions in New Bedford, Worcester, Boston, and online where LGBTQ older adults, caregivers, and family members, as well as aging service providers from Massachusetts, actively participated and shared their insights on the essential services and programs needed as they age. As a result of this process, Commissioners produced an updated mission statement and vision statement and identified nine priority focus areas with goals and key objectives. Strategic planning updates were provided to the full Commission during quarterly meetings.

2025 Mission Statement

The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging enhances the quality of life for LGBTQ older adults in Massachusetts through state policy and program recommendations, collaborations, partnerships, and advocacy.

2025 Vision Statement

Massachusetts' LGBTQ older adults and caregivers will have equitable access to programs, services, benefits, social support, and community that maximize their quality of life and enable them to thrive as they age.

Nine Priority Areas:

- 1. Infrastructure for Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging**
- 2. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Lens for all Commission work**
- 3. Public Visibility and Advancement of Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging**
- 4. Statewide Needs Assessment of LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 5. Social Support and Community Engagement for LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 6. Affirming and Accessible Healthcare for LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 7. Safe and Affordable Housing for LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 8. Policy and Advocacy for LGBTQ Older Adults**
- 9. LGBTQ Cultural Competency Training**

1 Infrastructure for Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging



Goal: Commission has the infrastructure needed to be a robust, ongoing, active body that can continue to accomplish its goals for decades to come.



Objective: Establish clear guidelines and operational standards for Commissioners to work by, and advocate for additional funding to employ full-time staff to oversee the operations, development and priorities of the Commission. The work of the Commission is predicated on its expansion/strengthening its infrastructure.



Actions:

- **Advocate** for increased state funding to support hiring full-time Commission Director.
- **Establish** clear and robust operational frameworks including procedural guidelines and standards/rules for Commissioners to follow.
- **Create** an advisory board (individuals with lived experience and other added expertise) to provide broader input to guide the Commission's work.

2

Employ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Lens for all Commission Work



Goal: The Commission is representative of diverse communities and takes them into account in its work and pays special attention to the intersection of multiple social identities within the LGBTQ community.



Objective: Before any actions are taken by the Commission, confirm that diversity, equity and inclusion has been centered in work and decision-making.



Actions:

- **Implement** DEI training programs for staff/commissioners that focus on cultural competence, unconscious bias, and inclusive practices that help build a more informed approach to LGBTQ aging issues.
- **Consider** DEI principles in every aspect of the Commission's work, from policy formation and advocacy to programming.
- **Seek** feedback from the community to identify gaps or opportunities for improvement.
- **Establish** an Advisory Board of individuals with lived experience that is representative of varied communities within the larger LGBTQ community.
- **Partner** with organizations addressing racial and ethnic minorities and LGBTQ challenges to improve outreach, engagement and service delivery.
- **Ensure** all marketing materials uses inclusive language and imagery to reflect the diversity of the community the Commission serves, including those from marginalized groups.
- **Achieve** diverse representation in Commission seats, providing different viewpoints and advocacy.
- **Encourage** organizations with seats to appoint members with varied perspectives and backgrounds.
- **Promote** resource guides in different languages that list LGBTQ-friendly services and resources, such as healthcare providers, legal counsel, and social services.

3

Public Visibility and Advancement of Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging



Goal: LGBTQ older adults and their formal and informal support networks in Massachusetts are aware of and understand the role of Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging.



Objective: Create a more impactful presence for the Commission and its members through fostering community partnerships, sharing developments and creating a website that is easily navigated by the community.



Actions:

- **Develop** an online presence including a website that is user-friendly, regularly updated, and contains resources, event calendars, Commissioners information, ways to get involved, and contact information. Use social media for campaigns for community engagement, to communicate success stories, forthcoming events, and vital information.
- **Promote** a list of resources for LGBTQ older adults with sections related to healthcare, legal assistance, housing, social supports, policy, trainings, and reports. Ex: guides for navigating healthcare, understanding legal rights, and accessing social services.
- **Collaborate** with local organizations, community centers, healthcare providers, and advocacy groups to achieve the Commission's goals.
- **Expand** collaborative relationships with the organizations seated on the Commission. Ensure Commissioners are sharing information from meetings with their organizations and exploring opportunities where groups can link to promote work.
- **Participate** in local events, State House events, and other community events as appropriate to promote the Commission's goals.
- **Collaborate** with other state Commissions to identify areas of shared interest and goals.
- **Develop** a calendar of ongoing listening sessions for continuous input from the community to impact the Commission's goals.
- **Promote** events to celebrate and recognize the contributions of LGBTQ older adults.
- **Advocate** for LGBTQ older adults' visibility in broader aging and social service programs.

4 Statewide Needs Assessment of LGBTQ Older Adults



Goal: Establish a baseline, comprehensive understanding of the priorities and needs of the LGBTQ older adult community in Massachusetts.



Objective: Conduct a statewide, comprehensive needs assessment of LGBTQ older adults. Reach 1,000+ LGBTQ older adults and those living with HIV and ask questions on issues of housing, healthcare, socialization, transportation, economic security, etc.



Actions:

- **Engage** researchers and public health organizations to create a needs assessment framework that captures the diverse experiences and needs of LGBTQ older adults and covers critical areas: healthcare access, housing, social support, economic stability, policy, discriminations, etc.
- **Build** a network with community centers, advocacy groups, etc., to help disseminate the assessment tool and encourage participation.
- **Collect** information about the experiences and needs of LGBTQ older individuals and analyze the collected information to identify trends, themes, gaps in services and priority areas for interventions.
- **Compile** the findings into a report, publish and make available on website. Also distribute to other organizations, policy makers, service providers and community leaders.
- **Produce** recommendations for programming, services, advocacy to meet the needs of LGBTQ older adults in Massachusetts.



5 Social Support and Community Engagement for LGBTQ Older Adults



Goal: LGBTQ older adults have access to expanded community engagement and support via inclusive programs and strategic partnerships.



Objective: Promote LGBTQ inclusive community engagement strategies to meet the specific needs of LGBTQ older adults and cultivate a sense of inclusion, safety, and support.



Actions:

- **Promote** the distribution and access to LGBTQ resources and events through the Commission website.
- **Partner** with community groups to host listening sessions congruent with other LGBTQ programming.
- **Encourage** and support the development of bridge building within the community through programs and social engagement to bring LGBTQ older adults together.
- **Recommend** that community spaces are inclusive and accessible to all LGBTQ older adults. This involves not only physical accessibility but also creating an environment where everyone feels valued and respected.
- **Promote** peer support networks where LGBTQ older adults can connect, share their experiences, and support one another.
- **Work** to reduce social isolation through the promotion of community outreach efforts to connect with LGBTQ older adults who may be isolated or unaware of available resources. This can include partnerships with local LGBTQ organizations and aging service providers.



6

Affirming and Accessible Healthcare for LGBTQ Older Adults



Goal: LGBTQ older adults have access to affirming, culturally appropriate and accessible healthcare and long-term care (LTC) addressing their unique needs and challenges.



Objective: Promote healthcare and LTC access for LGBTQ older adults in inclusive and affirming healthcare environments, enhancing cultural competence among healthcare providers, and advocating for policies that eliminate barriers to care.



Actions:

- **Advocate** for the protection of all comprehensive healthcare services and needs including gender-affirming care, HIV-related care, and behavioral health for LGBTQ older adults.
- **Serve** as an advocate and promoter for training programs and resources for healthcare personnel on LGBTQ cultural competency to promote respectful and informed treatment.
- **Organize** and promote workshops and informational sessions on healthcare rights and services for LGBTQ older individuals.
- **Promote** and distribute resources or lists of LGBTQ affirming healthcare practitioners and services.
- **Collaborate** with LGBTQ organizations and partner with groups specializing in LGBTQ older adults' issues to improve outreach and service delivery.
- **Promote** training for LGBTQ older adults to establish an Advanced Directive and Healthcare Proxy.



7

Safe and Affordable Housing for LGBTQ Older Adults



Goal: LGBTQ older adults have access to housing that ensures their safety and well-being, addresses their needs, honors their identities, and cultivates a sense of community and belonging.



Objective: Promote and advocate for inclusive and supportive housing policies and interventions that prioritize the safety of LGBTQ older adults.



Actions:

- **Advocate** for the protection of LGBTQ older adults living in senior living communities.
- **Advocate** for accessible and affordable housing for older adults living on low, middle and fixed incomes.
- **Advocate** for legislation that protects LGBTQ older adults from housing discrimination in shelters and contribute resources to inclusive housing initiatives.
- **Promote** awareness of housing policies that prohibit discrimination based on race, migration status, sexual orientation, and gender identity and share legal assistance information to those experiencing discrimination.
- **Recommend** LGBTQ cultural competency training for housing management and staff to effectively address the specific needs and challenges of LGBTQ older individuals.
- **Support** and advocate for housing developments designed to be inclusive and affirming for LGBTQ older adults.
- **Advocate** for financial support to construct LGBTQ inclusive housing opportunities at the local, state, and federal levels.
- **Use** new Commission website to showcase housing developments in various regions of MA that are inclusive and welcoming of LGBTQ older adults and share resources for those facing discrimination and urgent needs.
- **Implement** findings from statewide needs assessment to ensure promotion and advocacy for housing needs align with the needs of the community.

8

Policy and Advocacy for LGBTQ Older Adults



Goal: LGBTQ older adults are protected and supported through inclusive policy development, and building strong community partnerships.



Objective: Develop and execute a strong advocacy plan to influence policy changes addressing the unique challenges of LGBTQ older adults, ensuring their rights, dignity, and well-being.



Actions:

- **Advocate** for the protections of LGBTQ older adults rights in public policy through collaboration with local, state, and federal legislators. This includes anti-discrimination legislation, incarcerated populations, healthcare access, and housing rights.
- **Engage** in advocacy efforts to promote equity and work towards policy changes and implementation that benefit LGBTQ older adults.
- **Join** or form coalitions around legislation central to the Commission's mission.
- **Engage** with policymakers and collaborate with local and state governments to ensure that the needs of LGBTQ older persons are considered when designing and implementing policies.
- **Collaborate** with other organizations, such as LGBTQ advocacy groups, aging organizations, and human rights organizations, to boost advocacy efforts and establish a single voice.
- **Engage** with LGBTQ older adults to understand their needs, involve them in advocacy efforts, and ensure their voices are heard in policy discussions.

8

Policy and Advocacy for LGBTQ Older Adults (continued)



- **Collaborate** on public awareness campaigns regarding the successes and challenges for LGBTQ older persons and educate the public and lawmakers on the value of inclusive policies.
- **Provide** education for policymakers, service providers, and community organizations on the specific needs and rights of LGBTQ older adults.
- **Monitor** the implementation of policies affecting LGBTQ older adults and hold policy-makers accountable for their commitments.
- **Monitor** implementation of **LGBTQI Long Term Care Bill of Rights** included in Massachusetts 2024 Long Term Care legislation, **An Act to improve quality and oversight of long-term care.**
- **Advocate** for funding for full-time Commission Director.
- **Advocate** for:
 - **An Act relative to Massachusetts home care eligibility** – legislation that would ensure eligibility for home care services to those who are HIV+ but not yet age eligible.
 - **An Act relative to LGBT and HIV positive seniors in the Commonwealth** – legislation that would include LGBTQ older adults in state’s designation of populations of greatest social need.

9 LGBTQ Cultural Competency Training



Goal: LGBTQ older adults are treated with respect by LGBTQ culturally competent trained providers in state networks.



Objective: Evaluate implementation of current LGBTQ cultural competency required training by AGE and DPH networks and expand requirement to other networks.



Actions:

- **Evaluate** the implementation and impact of state mandated LGBTQ training for AGE and DPH networks.
- **Promote** LGBTQ cultural competency trainings for Long-Term Services and Supports, including LTC facilities and senior housing organizations across the Commonwealth.
- **Collaborate** with organizations focusing on LGBTQ older adults to offer comprehensive support and resources to address their social determinants of health needs.
- **Advocate** for agencies to require repeated mandated trainings.
- **Update** training regularly using needs assessment data and priorities.



Strategic Plan Final Statement

The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging strives to guarantee that LGBTQ older individuals thrive in conditions of respect, dignity, and inclusion. In pursuit of these overall goals, the Commission's 2025-2030 strategic plan is dedicated to employing a DEI lens in its work, conducting a statewide needs assessment to understand the needs and priorities of the community, and continuing to advocate for advancements and accessibility in healthcare, housing, policy development and LGBTQ inclusive trainings. Through these efforts, the Commission aims to establish a foundation for a future that is more inclusive and supportive for everyone.

Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Aging Membership

1. House Chair of Joint Committee on Aging and Independence Representative
2. Senate Chair of Joint Committee on Aging and Independence
3. Executive Office of Aging and Independence (AGE)
4. Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)
5. Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH)
6. LGBTQIA+ Aging Project
7. Fenway Health
8. GLBTQ+ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)
9. New England Association of HIV Over Fifty, Inc
10. MassEquality
11. Mass Aging Access
12. AARP Massachusetts
13. Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging
14. Massachusetts Senior Care Association
15. Home Care Aide Council

Governor Appointed Members:

16. LGBTQ Public Policy Expert
17. LGBTQ Elder Law Expert
18. Transgender Older Adult
19. LGBTQ Older Adult representing Cape Cod
20. LGBTQ Older Adult representing Western Massachusetts

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