

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 6, 2023

The Honorable Marcia L. Fudge
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Fudge,

As Members who believe in equitable housing and healthcare policies for all communities, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) and senior communities, we write to bring your attention to the mistreatment and discrimination that many LGBTQIA+ seniors face in senior housing and urge you to take action to protect this community.

According to SAGE, an organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQIA+ older adults, nearly half of older lesbian, gay, and bisexual couples experience discrimination when seeking senior housing.¹ Around 35% of intersex LGBTQ+ individuals, their partners, or their children rely on government-subsidized housing.² Further, more than 30% of LGBT seniors fear having to hide their sexuality or gender identity in order to avoid mistreatment in senior housing.³ We commend the steps that the Department of Housing and Urban Development has already taken to support vulnerable populations. However, it is urgent we act to ensure that everyone has access to safe and supportive housing, and not forget about the needs of communities too often overlooked. This is particularly important for LGBTQIA+ seniors who disproportionately experience homelessness or housing insecurity, and particularly urgent for trans and gender non-conforming individuals, and Black, Indigenous, and other elders of color who are part of the LGBTQIA+ older adult community.

We encourage you to consider requiring HUD funding recipient organizations to collect feedback from LGBTQIA+ community groups as part of the housing planning and building process, as well as after housing is constructed. Community engagement and outreach components already in place in local jurisdictions should be leveraged to capture the input, concerns, and needs of underserved population, including the LGBTQIA+ community. We also urge the agency to prioritize organizations supporting LGBTQIA+ seniors, and organizations that have committed to working with the LGBTQIA+ community through inclusive practices and outreach, in the distribution of HUD housing funds. In addition, it is crucial that all organizations receiving funds from HUD provide LGBTQIA+ seniors with culturally competent support. To this end, it is important that recipient organizations are required to properly train their employees

¹ SAGE, “The facts on LGBT aging”, <https://www.sageusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/sageusa-the-facts-on-lgbt-aging.pdf>

² Center for American Progress, “Key Issues Facing People With Intersex Traits”, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/key-issues-facing-people-intersex-traits/>

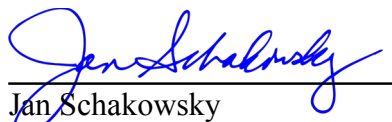

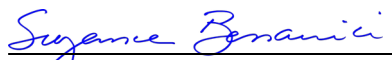
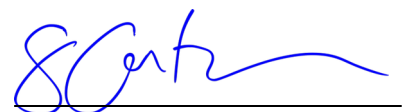
³ SAGE, “The facts on LGBT aging”, <https://www.sageusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/sageusa-the-facts-on-lgbt-aging.pdf>

or volunteers in implicit and explicit bias, as well as how to provide culturally competent and trauma-informed support.

Indeed, due to several factors, LGBTQIA+ seniors are more likely than their cisgender heterosexual counterparts to face housing insecurity and homelessness.⁴ And amongst overt experiences of discrimination, we also know that LGBTQIA+ elders face disproportionate rates of poverty, higher levels of social isolation, and barriers to safe and affirming medical care and shelter. Older intersex adults often face particular difficulty in receiving care, in part due to the prevalence of irreversible non-consensual medical interventions on intersex minors, and can struggle with a lack of legal recognition and protection. These are all factors that contribute to deep vulnerability and heightened risk of exploitation or violence, often missed in data collection around housing insecurity. We urge you to ensure that the HUD Working Group on LGBTQI+ Homelessness and Housing Equity, established by President Biden's June 15th, 2022, Executive Order, includes and prioritizes the needs of LGBTQIA+ seniors.

We applaud the efforts HUD has already taken to protect the LGBTQIA+ community from housing inequity, and encourage HUD to explicitly clarify that the protections against sex discrimination in the Fair Housing Act include protections against discrimination on the basis of sex characteristics in addition to sexual orientation and gender identity. We urge you to continue this work while paying special attention to the plight of LGBTQIA+ seniors.


Sincerely,


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress
Sean Casten
Member of Congress


⁴ Ibid.




Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress




Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress




Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress




Mike Quigley
Member of Congress




Kevin Mullin
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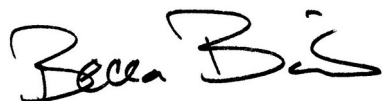
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Al Green
Member of Congress




Becca Balint
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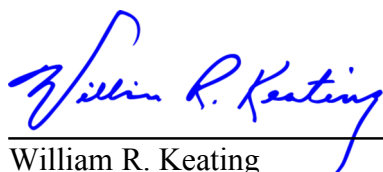
Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



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Dan Goldman
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