

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 11, 2017

VIA EMAIL

Heather Menne  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Community Living  
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Washington, DC 20201  
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Ms. Menne,

We write in opposition to the proposed form of the 2017 National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants (NSOAAP), noticed as a “proposed collection of certain information” on March 13, 2017. The proposed survey eliminates previously used demographic questions relating to the participant’s sexual orientation and gender identity. In this comment, we object to this removal and ask the Administration on Community Living (ACL) to return to its past practice of recognizing the unique struggles lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) elders face in accessing necessary services funded by the Older Americans Act (OAA).

Studies have consistently shown that LGBT older adults face significantly higher levels of poverty than the general population. The dire economic circumstances are compounded by an increased level of social isolation. Older LGBT Americans, who lived through a time far less welcoming to sexual minorities, are less likely to have children or close ties to immediate family. The familial support so many older Americans rely upon is tragically absent from many LGBT elders.

In 2011, a wide-ranging study from the National Senior Citizen Law Center and other organizations captured alarming evidence of widespread discrimination against LGBT seniors in long-term care facilities. Fear of discrimination may lead to LGBT older Americans not seeking out the support of assistance programs, worsening the already existing economic and social barriers affecting their lives.

From the evidence gathered on the plight of LGBT older Americans, there is a clear and present need for more information as to whether OAA funded programs are meeting the needs of their LGBT program participants. Senior services such as meal home delivery, transportation, caregiver support, and senior centers are lifesaving resources for LGBT older Americans. LGBT seniors deserve to have their specific needs examined. To erase LGBT demographic questions from the NSOAAP is to pretend that the needs of LGBT older Americans do not exist. Indeed, it is to pretend that LGBT older Americans themselves do not exist.

The LGBT demographic questions were, appropriately, optional and did not publicly identify any program participant in the survey results. The questions did not violate the participants' privacy; rather they ensured that a population with specific needs was seen and that programs helped all of those who needed assistance.

We strongly encourage ACL to reinstate the deleted demographics questions. ACL must commit to serving all elders, and that begins with a comprehensive NSOAAP that reveals whether OAA programs are reaching older LGBT Americans in need.

Sincerely,



Ted Deutch  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Ted W. Lieu  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



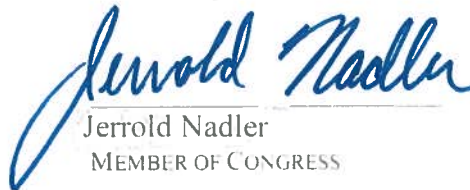
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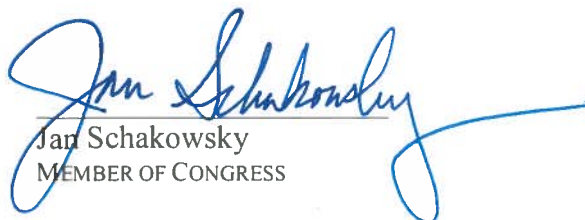
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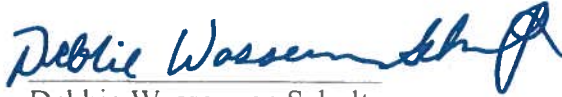
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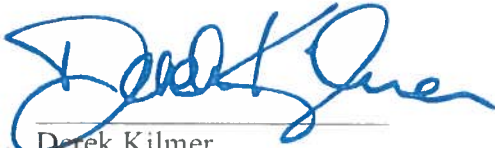
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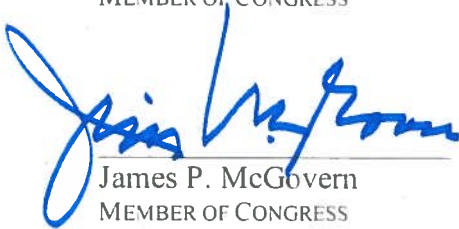
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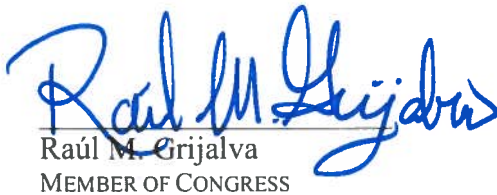
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