

Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance

Fighting for equal rights since 1971
P.O. Box 75265, Washington, DC 20013
Friday, November 7, 2014

Mayor Vincent C. Gray
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 316
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Gray:

We are concerned that the Age Friendly Plan for D.C., when finalized, may not fully reflect the needs of LGBT older adults.

In September 2013, the initial study of the needs of older adults in D.C., prepared under a contract with the N.Y. Academy of Medicine, concluded that D.C.'s Age-Friendly consultations had not adequately represented the needs of the LGBT community.

Consequently, Ron Swanda, an LGBT senior and active participant in the work of the Age-Friendly D.C. Task Force, voluntarily conducted a series of consultations with LGBT older adults in D.C. Mr. Swanda is a member of your GLBT Advisory Committee, which actively organized, supported and coordinated these consultations. A copy of his report, which contains numerous recommendations to meet LGBT needs, is on the GLAA Website:

<http://glaa.org/archive/2014/afdclgbt.pdf>

These LGBT recommendations were forwarded to Age-Friendly D.C. Task Force committee members. They condensed and summarized all recommendations, including those from the LGBT community, into the list of final recommendations you received on September 23, 2014. Because the recommendations were summarized and condensed, significant details are now lacking. Deputy Mayor Otero is using these recommendations to write the final Age Friendly D.C. Plan, which we understand is pending.

GLAA believes that not explicitly addressing the specific needs of the LGBT community in the Age Friendly D.C. Plan is tantamount to ignoring those needs. High-level goals and objectives lacking specifics are not likely to produce effective implementation plans. High-level goals will also not communicate and emphasize the need for D.C. agencies to substantially enhance their existing strategic plans to accommodate the needs of older adults.

Some of the recommendations generated by the LGBT community were reflected in the recommendations you received on September 23. However, other LGBT recommendations were omitted entirely. We are especially concerned that none of the recommendations regarding "Respect and Social Inclusion" were included in this list of final recommendations. Improving respect and social inclusion is a critical to LGBT older adults. An age-friendly plan lacking these elements would fall short of the initiative's purpose.

In other cases, the LGBT recommendations were watered down from their original language. Attached is a list of recommendations that better reflect the original recommendations of the LGBT community. We ask that these be fully considered when drafting the final Age-Friendly D.C. Plan.

GLAA looks forward to reviewing the upcoming Age-Friendly D.C. Plan, and trusts that it will reflect the recommendations from the LGBT community.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Rosendall
President
Phone: (202) 328-6278

Attachment

cc: Gail Kohn
Sterling A. Washington
Ron Swanda

Recommendations from the LGBT Community that were omitted in the Sept 23rd list of recommendations, and must be fully considered:

- Provide financial support, through the Office on Aging, for an LGBT-welcoming, senior-center offering daily free or low-cost meals, and programs designed to appeal to LGBT older adults (Domains 4 and 5).
- Increase the number of public restrooms that are gender-neutral and single-occupancy to provide safe options for transgender persons (Domain 1).
- Require all managers and staff of facilities that provide care to older adults (including nursing homes, assisted living facilities, rehabilitation facilities, hospitals and home health care agencies), and all licensed healthcare professionals who provide care to older adults, to undergo training in the needs of LGBT older adults and persons living with HIV. The current draft report mentions the need for LGBT training but does not require such training, and should list HIV as well as LGBT competency (Domain 8, Objective 1.6).

Recommendations from the LGBT Community that were “watered down” in the Sept 23rd list of recommendations, and should be considered stronger:

- Require D.C. housing agencies to promote housing that welcomes LGBT renters and owners (Domain 2, Objective 3.4) and require housing managers to undergo training on the needs of LGBT persons (Domain 2, Objective 3.5).
- Actively explore ways to expand job opportunities for older transgender individuals—who suffer very high rates of unemployment because of stigma and discrimination (Domain 6, Objective 2.8).
- Explicitly include the needs of LGBT persons in wellness and preventative health programs (Domain 8, Objective 2.17).
- Reform the Medicaid rules to provide the same Medicaid benefits that help married people afford nursing homes to unmarried people who love and care for each other (Domain 8, Objective 4.6). Provide financial and regulatory support for LGBT-friendly affordable housing options; rather than just to “encourage” LGBT-friendly, private options (Domain 3, Objective 2.9).