



# Newsletter

SUMMER 2021

NEWS FOR WASHINGTON D.C., MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA FROM SAGE

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## A Letter from the CEO

Dear Friend:

There's no question that this past year has been a deeply challenging one, as we all have struggled with the severe consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. But even in a year that has been greatly defined by devastating suffering and loss, SAGE's movement with and on behalf of LGBT+ elders has made truly remarkable progress! Nowhere is that more true than in the D.C. Metro area.

After years of advocacy led by SAGE, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser signed



legislation designating LGBT+ older people and older adults living with HIV as priority populations for local aging programs, establishing an LGBT cultural competency training requirement for elder care providers, and creating an LGBT Long-Term Care

Bill of Rights! Montgomery County followed suit by enacting its own Long-Term Care LGBT Bill of Rights; in a thank you message to SAGE Director of Advocacy Aaron Tax, Montgomery County Councilmember Evan Glass celebrated the County's leadership on

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## TESTIMONIAL

"As a board member, I know first-hand how critical SAGE's advocacy, programs, trainings, and services are to LGBT+ older adults in the DMV area and nationwide. My elderly mother receives home care from individuals who have been SAGEcare trained, and it has made a huge difference. I couldn't be prouder of the work done by this organization or the results it has realized in its decades of service to the community."

—Ruth Eisenberg, SAGE Board Member

## Letter from the CEO *continued from previous page*

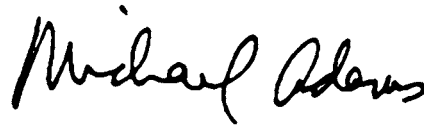
LGBT+ aging issues and noted that “much of that is thanks to your advocacy.” And after an ambitious push by SAGE and Equality Virginia, Virginia’s Governor signed legislation designating LGBT+ older adults a population of greatest social need, which means our community’s elders will be a priority for that state’s aging programs and services!

While this local progress is essential, it’s also critical that our federal government do right by LGBT+ older people, and *all* members of the LGBT+ community who face discrimination. That’s why SAGE is proud to be a founding member of the Freedom & Opportunity For All Coalition, a national campaign to convince Congress to pass the Equality Act and establish once and for all that *every* LGBT+ person in this country deserves the same civil rights protections available to all other Americans. These protections are an essential complement to the victory SAGE won last March, when

Congress adopted new language in the Older Americans Act that requires special focus on the needs of LGBT+ elders in federally funded services.

So, even in the midst of a pandemic, we’re making great progress. But there is so much more work to be done. It’s because of your partnership and support that this progress is possible. Please, continue to join with SAGE to ensure that our community’s elders are never invisible and are always valued and respected. Together, we can build a world where every LGBT+ older person can age with the dignity and support they deserve.

Sincerely,



**MICHAEL ADAMS**  
Chief Executive Officer

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## SAGEStrong Resiliency Fund

**Resiliency means adapting in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy or threats. That is what SAGE does. It’s what we did in the early years of the LGBT+ movement, following Stonewall.**

It’s what we did through the AIDS epidemic. It’s what SAGE continues to do to press for and win protections for our LGBT+ elders, like the Older Americans Act. And it’s our response now, during the COVID pandemic. The SAGEStrong Resiliency Fund: supports and expands our lifesaving and lifechanging programs and services and provides resources to create new initiatives to meet LGBT+ elders’ needs brought on by the COVID-19; propels

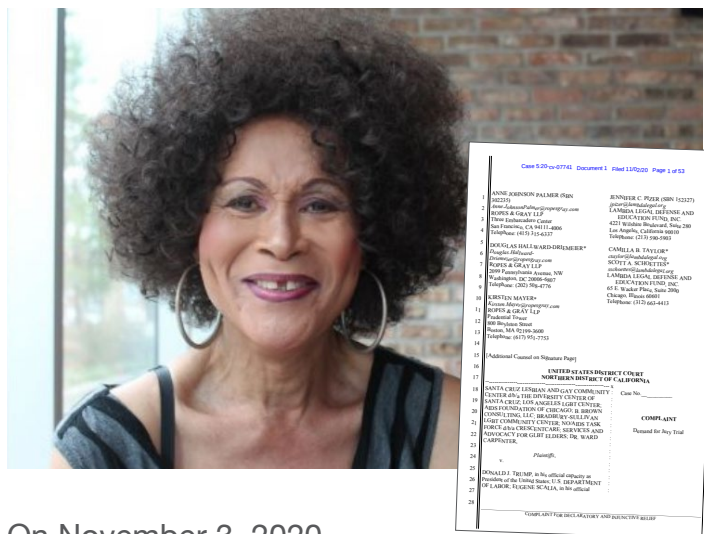


our advocacy to press for change and ensure that our LGBT+ elders are protected and that resources are dedicated to LGBT+ older people; launches programs and initiatives that support those most on the margins, like transgender elders and LGBT+ elders of color; allows for a nimble response when circumstances demand a completely different approach to a challenge; and strengthens our ability to collaborate which helps keep LGBT+ elders at the forefront in national conversations about aging and LGBT+ issues.

# Supporting LGBT+ Elders of Color

As our country continues to battle the harrowing reality of police violence against Black communities, **SAGE is committed** to working to undo the damages left by centuries of hate, violence, and racism by standing with our LGBT+ elder pioneers to fight racial injustice with resilience and passion.

- We released a training titled “Enriching Care for LGBT+ Older Adults of Color” SAGECare cultural competency training to center Black lives.
- We created a survey to understand how LGBT+ elders of color experience SAGE’s programs and services to ensure their needs are being met.
- We know that people of color have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, which was compounded by historical racism and economic disparity. We created [SAGECents](#), a digital wellness platform made specifically for LGBT+ elders to increase financial stability and reduce economic stress.
- We pledged to [join with our peer organizations](#) to make explicit commitments to embrace anti-racism and end white supremacy.



On November 3, 2020, SAGE and seven other organizational plaintiffs represented by Lambda Legal sued the Trump administration over its directive that effectively bans anti-racism and anti-sexism training in federal agencies and programs. A substantial portion of SAGE’s training and technical assistance, including the work of our federally funded National Resource Center on LGBT Aging, would have been in the crosshairs of this misguided presidential directive if it was allowed to stand. SAGE and our fellow plaintiffs requested that the court enjoin the Trump administration from enforcing the training ban while the lawsuit proceeds.

Thankfully, after the Biden-Harris administration took office, they reversed this ban.

## NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON LGBT AGING: SUPPORTING OUR ELDERS THROUGH SHARED RESOURCES

A partnership between SAGE and the federal Administration on Aging, the **National Resource Center on LGBT Aging** (NRC) was founded in 2010, and is the first and only technical assistance center with the aim of improving the quality of life for LGBT+ elders. The NRC provides training and educational resources to LGBT+ organizations, aging providers and LGBT+ elders, including topics like HIV & Aging Resources, Support for Caregivers, Employment and up-to-date information on COVID-19, as well a tool to help locate local resources by state. It’s 900+ resources have been downloaded more than 1.2M times over the last ten years.



# Advocacy: Standing Proudly with and on Behalf of LGBT+ Pioneers

SAGE has been busy in the D.C. area working to improve the lives of LGBT+ older people and older people living with HIV.

On October 6, 2020 Montgomery County, Maryland passed an LGBT Long Term Care Bill of Rights. SAGE worked with Evan Glass, Montgomery County Maryland Council Member at-large, to pass this critical legislation in the county that is home to the NIH and Walter Reed, located just north of Washington, D.C.. The Montgomery County Council unanimously passed the legislation, making it the first jurisdiction in Maryland to pass such a bill. This bill ensures no one can face discrimination based on their actual or perceived HIV status and LGBT status in medical care facilities, personal care facilities and nursing homes. [Aaron Tax from SAGE appeared on NBC4](#), Washington, D.C.'s NBC affiliate, to talk about the new law. SAGE continues working with Free State Justice (Maryland's statewide equality group) and MD Delegate Gabriel Acevero to strategize about re-introducing a LTC Bill of Rights and a broader LGBT+/aging policy agenda in the state. SAGE testified in support of the state-wide legislation early in 2020.

On November 2, 2020 D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser signed legislation designating both LGBT+ older people and older people living



with HIV as greatest social needs populations, establishing a cultural competency training requirement, and implementing an LGBT Long Term Care Bill of Rights in the District. SAGE helped draft the legislation with the office of D.C. Councilmember Mary Cheh. SAGE and many other organizations and advocates in D.C. helped advocate for its passage. It is the most comprehensive LGBT+ aging law in the nation.

Finally, on March 27, 2021, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam signed a law designating LGBT+ older people a population of greatest social need under the Older Americans Act in the state, ensuring that LGBT+ older people do not fall through the cracks in terms of receiving aging services and supports. SAGE worked closely with Equality Virginia to introduce and pass this legislation.



## TESTIMONIAL

"I support SAGE because it is the only organization that focuses exclusively on improving the lives of LGBT+ elders through service delivery and through advocacy. At SAGE, our motto is 'We refuse to be invisible.' SAGE will make sure I'm in the picture."

—Bruce Lederman, SAGE Board Member, Maryland

# SAGECare: LGBT+ Cultural Competency for Long-term Care Providers

While SAGE is advocating for policy changes across the country, we also recognize the power of training and educating mainstream long-term care providers.



To improve conditions in these facilities for LGBT+ elders, SAGE developed an LGBT+ cultural competency training program to teach mainstream nursing homes, assisted living facilities and home care agencies how to serve LGBT+ people. This program is called [SAGECare](#).

Through SAGECare, providers can earn credentials based on the depth and amount that staff are trained. Facilities can earn a Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum credential—

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## TESTIMONIAL

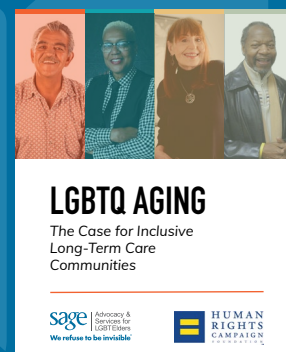
### from a SAGECare Trained Provider:

*“Our LGBTQ residents are grateful to be affirmed in the midst of their community of care as they receive the respect and support from staff. This continues to be a priority for our organization and we keep finding new opportunities to engage and work with the LGBTQ community as we seek to provide services to older adults in each of our community locations. We are grateful for the SAGE staff and their resources that we know will continue to help us move forward in this effort.”*

## PROVIDING EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE CARE FOR LGBT+ OLDER PEOPLE IN LONG-TERM CARE COMMUNITIES

In a recent national survey of LGBT+ older adults by AARP, 60% of those surveyed were concerned about how they would be treated in a long-term care setting, fearful that they might be refused care, or face verbal or physical harassment or abuse. More than 80% of survey respondents said they would be more comfortable if long-term care facilities took actions to intentionally welcome and affirm LGBT+ older people.

In partnership with the Human Rights Campaign, SAGE launched the [Long-Term Care Equality Index \(LEI\)](#) to encourage and help long-term care facilities adopt policies and best practices designed to provide culturally competent care to LGBT+ older people. Residential Long-Term Care Facilities that would like to participate in the LEI are encouraged to sign the Commitment to Caring Pledge. The LEI is generously funded by the AARP Foundation and Ted Snowdon.





# SAGECare: LGBT+ Cultural Competency for Long-term Care Providers

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demonstrating how committed that facility is to LGBT+ affirming care. This has a real impact on LGBT+ elders and their families, with over 81,280+ LGBT+ older people served by SAGE trained agencies in 2020.

Last year, we trained 18,250+ professional caregivers from 351 organizations across 45 states. Since the program's inception, we've trained nearly 115,000 professional caregivers, including many across Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia:

- **Washington, D.C.:** 2,234 professional caregivers trained across 86 agencies;
- **Maryland:** 2,512 professional caregivers trained across 68 agencies
- **Virginia:** 1,368 professional caregivers trained across 42 agencies

SAGECare's training improves the services that healthcare providers and community facilities provide by creating a more welcoming community for LGBT+ elders. When staff understands the lived experience of LGBT+ older adults, they are able to provide more compassionate and person-centered care for LGBT+ community members.



## TESTIMONIAL

**from an LGBT+ Elder in a SAGECare Trained Facility:**

*"(At this community) I was never asked how many children I have. So, I was never asked why on earth someone like me doesn't have children. Or why I'm not married. Every time I hear those questions I feel sad, helpless and vulnerable... But no one (at this community) asked why. It took several months at home to realize—it must be a policy of (this community). It required great insight and sensitivity by the people responsible for that policy. It allowed me to let down certain defenses and be cared for."*



## TESTIMONIAL

"For LGBT+ elders, social isolation is more prevalent, and likely because they have traditionally tried to minimize the risk of discovery. As these LGBT+ seniors navigate these challenges, they are seeking out partnership organizations like SAGE that will advocate for them, and drive the kind of cultural competency awareness that enables them to live their lives more fully and safely."

**—Ian Lee Brown, Vice President of Organizational Development, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Erickson Senior Living, SAGE Board Member, Washington, D.C.**

# SAGEConnect: Reducing Social Isolation for LGBT+ Elders

For LGBT+ elders across the country, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to eliminate in-person gatherings and much-needed social interaction.

In the LGBT+ community, isolation is especially acute for those who aren't able to leave their homes. [SAGEConnect](#) was launched in April 2020 to reduce isolation and promote well-being by bringing together volunteers nationwide to connect with LGBT+ elders.

Participants get matched with a SAGEConnect volunteer and receive weekly phone or video calls through a simple, one-step call line that allows you to connect without ever giving away your personal information.

Volunteers commit to a 30-minute phone call or video chat once a week for six weeks, and are matched with an LGBT+ elder looking to receive a call. To date, we've connected 382 LGBT+ older people with a volunteer, including participants in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia.

## TESTIMONIAL

from a SAGEConnect Participant in Maryland:

*"My SAGEConnection is always an absolute joy to speak with. We spoke for our longest time to date—one hour!—and talked a lot about trips we both are missing out on due to COVID. I always learn so much from my conversations with her—from the Pow Wow Native American festival in London to Cuban culture—I really appreciate the conversations."*



## TESTIMONIAL

from Julia, a SAGE member:

*"You're letting people know that they're not invisible. That someone does care about you in the middle of this crazy crisis really makes me feel a heck of a lot better."*

## 24/7 SUPPORT

LGBT+ elders can always access the free [SAGE National LGBT Elder Hotline](#), which connects LGBT+ older people who would like to talk with friendly responders.

The hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in English and Spanish, with translation in 180 languages. The hotline is managed by our partner, United Way Worldwide, and available at 877-360-LGBT.

# Mary's House for Older Adults is Breaking Ground in D.C.!

**2021 is a big year for Mary's House as they plan to obtain their building permit and host a groundbreaking ceremony!**

Mary's House for Older Adults, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation incorporated in the District of Columbia in September 2012. The vision of Mary's House is to create affordable, independent, communal housing for older adults that will eliminate the intense social isolation experienced because of aging and by subtle and overt discrimination and intolerance based on one's sexual orientation and identity.

Mary's House seeks to create living environments that celebrate and honor the whole person as they age. Mary's House will be the first communal residence of its kind

in Washington, D.C. meeting the cultural and relational needs of adults over 60 years of age, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and same gender-loving (LGBTQ/SGL) individuals.

Led by beloved community organizer, leader, and fierce advocate [Dr. Imani Woody](#), Mary's House educates on and advocates for issues germane to elders, emphasizing the lack of safe and affordable housing as a public health intervention.

For more on Mary's House, see the [south facing](#) and [north facing](#) architectural renderings, as well as the [floorplan](#). You can access more information about [how to support Mary's House here](#), or visit their [website](#).

## NATIONAL LGBT HOUSING INITIATIVE: A WELCOMING PLACE TO CALL HOME

One of the most important decisions we make as older adults is where we're going to live during our senior years. For all older adults, affordability is often a challenge. For LGBT+ older adults, so is finding a place that's welcoming, as 48% of older same-sex couples have experienced housing discrimination. LGBT+ elders deserve a place to feel free to be themselves and be treated respectfully and compassionately.

With our **National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative**, SAGE is addressing these challenges on several fronts by:

- Building LGBT-friendly housing in New York City
- Advocating nationally against housing discrimination
- Training eldercare providers to be LGBT+ culturally competent through SAGECare
- Educating LGBT+ elders about their housing rights
- Helping builders across the U.S. replicate LGBT-friendly housing





# LGBT ELDERS HAVE WAITED LONG ENOUGH.



## **STAND UP FOR LGBTQ+ ELDERS: TELL THE SENATE TO PASS THE EQUALITY ACT**

Discrimination is still commonplace for LGBTQ+ Americans. Federal LGBTQ+ nondiscrimination protections like the ones outlined in the Equality Act would ensure that all LGBTQ+ Americans can live, work, and access public spaces free from discrimination, no matter what state they call home.

This is especially crucial for our LGBTQ+ pioneers who have waited long enough for this vital legislation.

We need you to call today and show support for senators who stand for equality—and tell those who don't that it's time to join the 72% of Americans who do. It's #EqualityTime.

**IT'S SIMPLE. EASY. AND QUICK!**

**VISIT [SAGEUSA.ORG/EQUALITYTIME](https://sageusa.org/equalitytime) AND JOIN SAGE IN  
TELLING SENATORS TO SUPPORT THE EQUALITY ACT.**