

# Governor Pritzker Signs Legislation Aimed at Protecting LGBTQ Older Adults

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**CHICAGO** - Governor Pritzker signed SB3490, an amendment to the Illinois Act on Aging designating specific protections and services for older LGBTQ adults. This signing took place on National Honor Your LGBTQ Elders Day, a day of recognition for older LGBTQ individuals who fought for equality and led the movement for equality still active today. The amended act creates the Illinois Commission on LGBTQ Aging to investigate and advise on improving services and needs of older LGBTQ adults.

“These elder adults are trailblazers in the fight for LGBTQ rights, growing up in an a more hostile time where basic rights were regularly denied based on gender and sexuality,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “This amendment to the Illinois Act on Aging honors that struggle by ensuring all people can age in dignity with equal access to essential care and social supports.”

The Illinois Commission on LGBTQ Aging will study issues relevant to LGBTQ elders including, but not limited to, housing, health, caregiver support, psychosocial needs, assisted living, and HIV/AIDS specific care. This includes analyzing the impact of legislation on these issues, recommending how to increase awareness for providers and for older LGBTQ adults, and making benefits more accessible. The council, in conjunction with the broader Illinois Council on Aging, will ensure equal treatment and care for older adults regardless of gender identity or sexuality.

According to research by the LGBTQ Aging Center, LGBTQ elders are more susceptible to isolation, neglect, and abuse than their straight counterparts as they age. LGBTQ Elder’s Day, first celebrated in 2015, is intended to recognize and uplift trailblazers in the LGBTQ rights movement while also drawing awareness to the vulnerabilities of LGBTQ seniors.

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“LGBTQ older adults face unique challenges, and we want Illinois to lead in valuing their identities, expanding access to inclusive services, and meeting the critical needs of this population,” said **Paula Basta, Director of the Illinois Department on Aging**. “This new law affirms the administration’s continued commitment to supporting LGBTQ elders in our communities.”

"Members of the LGBTQ community come from all walks of life and, though they age like anyone else, they also commonly encounter unique challenges," said **Rep. Lakesia Collins (D-Chicago)**. "Our public policies and institutions should be inclusive and the best way to accomplish that is to ensure that everyone in society is represented in decision making. I am pleased the Governor has signed SB 3490, which will improve representation and enhance our ability to assess and address factors affecting LGBTQ people as they age."

“Older adults who identify as LGBTQ and older adults living with HIV face unique challenges—this is a group of people who have faced discrimination, stigmatization and barriers to care their whole lives,” said **State Senator Karina Villa (D-West Chicago)**. “By providing a designated advocate, this legislation simply seeks to increase equity in the care given to older adults across the board.”

“On behalf of our 1.7 million members, AARP Illinois commends the Governor for signing this important bill into law,” said **Philippe Largent, State Director**. “SB3490 is a critical step to breaking down barriers to access and addressing the disparities faced by older LGBTQ adults – a key part of the state’s rapidly growing elderly population who will now have a louder voice on issues impacting them.”

“On behalf of AIDS Foundation Chicago (AFC) and Pride Action Tank, I want to thank the Illinois General Assembly for passing SB3490 and the governor for signing this important legislation into law,” said **Kim L. Hunt, Executive Director of Pride Action Tank, a project of AFC**. “This critical legislation helps ensure that LGBTQ older adults and older people living with HIV are seen, have a voice at that table and are treated with dignity and respect.”

"We must tackle the disparities LGBTQ+ older adults and older adults living with HIV face. By directing resources, training, and attention to meeting the needs of these critical populations, SB 3490 helps make sure Illinois is a more affirming and equitable state for LGBTQ+ older adults and older adults living with HIV,” said **Mike Ziri, Equality Illinois Director of Public Policy**. “We applaud Governor Pritzker, Senator Villa, Representative Collins, and the Illinois Department on Aging for advancing this important initiative. And we are grateful to the broad coalition of partners from across the state who helped build the case for this important law."

“We are thrilled that Governor Pritzker has made SB 3490 the law in Illinois. LGBTQ+ elders and older people living with HIV will receive the culturally competent aging services and supports they need and deserve,” **said Lynn Faria, Executive Vice President at SAGE.** “We look forward to our continued work with advocates, the Illinois Department on Aging, and our champions in the legislature, notably Sen. Villa and Rep. Collins. Let’s ensure that Illinois continues to be at the forefront of inclusive aging.”

"I salute Gov. Pritzker, Sen. Villa, Rep. Collins, our partner organizations, and everyone who had a role in getting the LGBTQ+ Older Adults Bill passed," said **Billy Rogers, co-founder of the Golden Rainbows of Illinois South (GRIS),** a group formed in 2021 through the Rainbow Cafe LGBTQ Center in Carbondale. "My spouse of 32 years is 87 years old and I am 66 years old. You might say I am in the 'fourth quarter' and my spouse is in 'overtime.' We are living in this culture of disparity, having been victim to insults and discrimination, but we are celebrating this moment today. GRIS is now working to provide programs and resources for the aging 50+ LGBTQ+ seniors throughout Southern Illinois. As co-founder of GRIS, I realize the work is far from over."

“As an LGBTQ+ elder, and native-born Illinoisan, I am proud of the long history that the Prairie State has in progressive legislation that has made this state one of the minority of U.S states where LGBTQ+ citizens enjoy full civil rights,” **said Donald M. Bell (He, Him, His), LGBTQ+ Elder and Advocate.** “In stark contrast to the legislatures of many states across the country where LGBTQ+ rights are currently under assault, Illinois continues to reinforce the rights of all members of our community, whether they reside in the Chicago metropolitan area, or in the downstate, small town, rural, or exurban parts of Illinois. Thank you to Gov. Pritzker, Rep. Collins, Sen. Villa, and our partners for advancing this important bill. The Great State of Illinois is a great place to call home!”

“The approval of SB3490 represents a pivotal moment for LGBTQ+ older adults across Illinois. Not only does the Commission on LGBTQ+ Aging represent a historic recognition of LGBTQ+ elders, but it represents an investment in the future of the entire LGBTQ+ community across our state,” said **August Hieber, Manager of Advocacy & Programs at The Chicago Bar Foundation.** “As a transgender Illinoisan, I am so grateful to Governor Pritzker, Representative Collins, and Senator Villa for centering the histories and experiences of the older adults in my community.”