

Heather Pender, Director of Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging, asks you to provide your comments during the Minnesota Board on Aging's (MBA) public comment period.

"Hello everyone. My name is Heather Pender Director with Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging.

Dancing Sky is the AAA that covers the 21 northwest counties in MN. Today I want to talk about the longevity of the Intrastate funding formula. The question I want to discuss and break apart with you is, can we live with this funding for the next 10 years?

The formula revision means something a bit different for each area agency on aging, but the bottom line is that it supports funding for many programs that help seniors live successfully in their homes as long as possible. Historically once these funds are allocated, there are not changes for 10 years or more. Likely what is decided on will be what each AAA region can expect to support their communities for the next 10 plus years.

The loss of these funds to the rural Area Agencies on Aging is serious. It will impact the amount of services to seniors that each AAA can fund. The loss of funds will directly impact our older community members in rural areas where resources are already sparse. Impacts will be to the most vital supports such as meals programs, homemaker and chore services, transportation to medical appointments and other supportive services. The OAA funds are targeted to those with the deepest need and these cuts will affect our seniors with the deepest need.

Funding reallocation will directly impact our rural Minnesota communities where distance to services and staffing programs are significant barriers to services. At Dancing Sky our mission and vision is to work with rural communities to help older adults stay in control of their choices. Together older adults and communities thrive.

Thrive means to prosper, be fortunate or successful. We cannot expect our seniors to be successful if we are not fighting to keep the resources locally that will help them thrive. The loss of funds allocated to rural Minnesota will directly impact the quality of life for many of our older community members and put the future of their independence at risk, forcing some to move into nursing homes or move outside of their communities of choice.

90% of older adults in Minnesota indicate that they want to live in their own homes and communities. The loss of these funds allocated to rural Minnesota will make it impossible to provide the home and community-based support that are needed to make that a reality.

Can we live with this funding for the next 10 years? You decide, but at Dancing Sky we believe that we should not give up until we have secured the most support possible for

our seniors and their future. People choosing to live in rural communities deserve the same access to services as those living in large cities.

You can help by submitting your public comment.

Thank you.”