

Laurie Brownell, Director of Southeastern Minnesota Area Agency on Aging, asks you to provide your comments during the Minnesota Board on Aging's (MBA) public comment period.

"Hello, my name is Laurie Brownell, Director of the Southeastern MN Area Agency on Aging serves the eleven County area of SE MN. 88,000 older adults live in our planning and service area which includes one large urban area – the city of Rochester and 252 rural communities – from Walen to Wasioja to Wabasha.

Our base funding through the current Intrastate Funding Formula for 2023 is at 10.3%, with the proposed IFF Draft 5 – our allocation percentage would drop to 8.9%.

This results in a reduction of administration funding of \$28,447 and a loss of \$252,023 in Title funding distributed to provider agencies in SE Minnesota to support home and community-based services.

I would like to Break Down the Impact of Draft 5 in SE MN

- Title IIIB – HCBS Programs would see a Reduction of \$62,341 – that would result in the reduced service hours or potentially the elimination of core community-based supports such as legal services, information and assistance programs, chore/homemaker programs assisted transportation, senior meals and visiting programs.
- Title III C1 – Congregate Dining would see a reduction of \$93,827 under draft 5 resulting in a loss of 12,941 meals. This would be such a shame as the SE nutrition provider – semcac has worked very hard to bring back congregate sites in SE after the pandemic.
- Title III C2 – Home Delivered Meals would be reduced by \$54,693 and the loss of 7,244 meals. Excerpts from senior meal recipients.
 - *Just a quick note to say thank you to all of you who work so hard to make Meals on Wheels available to all who need them. I recently suffered a series of small strokes, and I can no longer drive. It is difficult to get to the store for groceries and I never was good at cooking. Also, it is sometimes hard to make a nice meal for just one person. I now look forward to a nice meal instead of just a sandwich or bowl of cereal.*
 - *Thank you to all who are responsible for providing the food for the Meals on Wheels Program. I am a 90-year-old widow, living alone. I had COVID last winter with a long recovery. I did a lot of delivery of meals years ago when I was able to and I appreciate Dennis, who delivers my meals. I especially enjoy Bratwurst w/Kraut, lasagna, and the nice variety of desserts. Just want you to know I appreciate your service, thank you!*

- Title IIID – Funding for Evidenced Based Programs would be cut by \$5,213 – most likely resulting the elimination of at least 5 evidence-based programs such as Tai Ji Quan, Aging Mastery, & Matter of Balance.
- Title IIIE – Caregiver Supports would see a reduction of \$35,949 – resulting in the reduction or elimination of respite/caregiver services such as Caregiver information and assistance programs, training, respite, counseling and support groups. Currently SE MN IIIE providers have the highest in-home respite #'s of any AAA region in the state and this level of cut would be devastating.

The reality is that some programs may not be able to continue to operate with the reduced level of OAA funding I just mentioned. These funds are meant to be the payer of last resort with expectation that all other funds are exhausted first. Often times OAA services are the only services available in rural communities and they do not have the same number of funding sources and services that non-rural areas have.

For example, a small transportation provider facing a funding would have reduced capacity and this may mean that they would have to prioritize services to offer only medical rides and non-medical rides to the grocery store or to a movie would not be possible -leading to increased social isolation of older adults.

Rural areas also experience staffing challenges and a reduced capacity to recruit and retain volunteers which could result in elimination of key programs such as chore/homemaker that are critical to help older adults stay in their homes.

SEMAAA has worked hard to establish quality relationships with providers in SE and Draft 5 – would create more gaps in services for older adults in SE MN.

Thank you for supporting rural equity by expressing your concerns during the IFF public comment period beginning April 3. Your support will truly help rural MN to live their healthiest life possible.”