



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**8A**  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** March 28, 2023

**Title of Item:** Consider Funding Support Letter

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	<b>Action Requested:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*
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<b>Submitted by:</b> Jessica Seibert	<b>Department:</b> Administration
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<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Commissioner Travis Leiviska	<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 5 Min.
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**Summary of Issue:**

Attached is a proposed letter of support to the Minnesota Board on Aging regarding equitable funding for rural communities.

**Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:**

**Recommended Action/Motion:**  
Approve/Deny letter of funding support to the Minnesota Board on Aging.

**Financial Impact:**

Is there a cost associated with this request?       Yes       No

What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$

Is this budgeted?       Yes       No      *Please Explain:*



## AITKIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Aitkin County Government Center  
307 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW, Room 310  
Aitkin, MN 56431

Phone: 218-927-3093  
Fax: 218-927-7374

March 28, 2023

Kari L Benson, Executive Director  
Minnesota Board on Aging  
PO Box 64976  
St Paul, MN 55164

Sent via Email

Re: Equitable Intrastate Funding for Rural Communities

Dear Minnesota Board on Aging Members and Executive Director Kari Benson:

On behalf of the Aitkin County Board, we ask for your support to protect aging in rural Minnesota by ensuring an equitable Intrastate Funding Formula (IFF) for rural communities. The current formula is heavily weighted to 60+ demographics and favors the 7-county metro region. Greater MN needs your support, and the health of older rural Minnesotans depends upon it.

As you are aware, Aitkin County has one of the oldest populations in the nation, not just the state of Minnesota. The median age in the United States is 38.2 years. According to data from the Census Bureau, in Aitkin County, Minnesota, the median age is 55.9 - about 18 years higher than the national median. A reported 32.8% of local residents are 65 and older, while only 17.5% are 18 and under. For context, 15.9% of the U.S. population are 65 or older and 24.1% are 18 and under.

Living in rural areas can mean limited options for services such as meal delivery programs, longer transportation time to appointments, limited access to technology and resources, and a smaller workforce to support programs. Inadequate services can have a negative impact on health, erode quality of life, and contribute to rising healthcare costs. Older American Act (OAA) programs truly act as the funder of last resort in Aitkin County. For many of our residents there are no other options available. There is no consistent public transportation in much of our county, limited broadband or insufficient speeds to order groceries online or attend telehealth appointments, and no Food Dudes to deliver hot meals to those who can afford to purchase from a restaurant. There are, however, Title III funded services delivered by AEOA, Legal Aid Services of NE MN, Lighthouse Center for Vital Living, Angels of McGregor, Something Cool Inc., and Aitkin County Care. In rural Minnesota, programs that provide services to older adults are at risk of being severely underfunded and not meeting the needs of our residents. The upcoming proposed changes to the Minnesota Intrastate Funding Formula do not meet the needs of older adults living in Greater Minnesota.

In addition, there are not many other funding options available. Currently, only 2% of all foundation dollars in Minnesota are specifically directed toward aging services. Additionally, 42% of the 2% is awarded in the 7-county metro area, leaving less funding for Greater MN.

Implications of not having an equitable formula include diminished health for our residents, loss of jobs supporting OAA funded programs, greater population migration to the metro area, and increased admissions to long-term care settings. We feel that there is a vital need to protect the interest of our older population who prefers to age in the communities of their choice.

**In Aitkin County we care deeply about the health and well being of our older adults and we support their desire to age independently and in their own homes as long as possible.**

The Aitkin County Board implores you to prevent cuts to vital services for seniors in the Arrowhead. Please advocate for an Intrastate Funding Formula weighted as follows: **20% for population 60+, 5% for 60+ with disability, 20% for 60+ low income, 15% for 60+ minority, 25% for 60+ rural, 5% for 60+ population density, 10% for 60+ living alone.** Help us maintain the opportunity for healthy aging in the Arrowhead and equitably support those living rural.

Sincerely,

J. Mark Wedel, Board Chair  
Aitkin County

Cc: Aitkin County Commissioners