

April 27, 2023  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Testimony in support of LD 1666 “An Act to Modernize the State Supplement to Supplemental Security Income by Updating the State Supplement and Removing Marriage Disincentives”**

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Georgia West and I live in Caribou. I am a self-advocate and serve on the board of Speaking Up For Us. I am a person with a disability and I think it is important to pass LD 1666.

When I lived in Indiana I was married and then I was diagnosed with my disability of autism late in life. I have been receiving disability since 2005 and I have not been able to work since then. When I was married, my partner didn't want me to work outside the home, but he struggled to keep a job. I was not in a healthy marriage, but I had no income of my own so it made it really hard to get out. I am no longer married, and I started my life over and live in Maine now.

I also live with many physical challenges and was diagnosed with arthritis at the age of 26. I have stability issues and because of this I have had a lot of major falls and hurt myself. I can't work now because of my physical issues and autism. I am engaged now, and want to get married. I should be with someone I am in love with and I don't want to be told I can't marry them or I will lose benefits. To me that is just wrong.

It is not right, why should people with disabilities suffer? What happens in a person's home is their business. I hear my friends who have lost their income and it is not right. I don't want to lose a right to get married and have to have a choice to either keep my income or lose a person. If I am happy with a person and want to marry them, I should be able to. Nobody should have to choose.

A marriage is sacred, and I shouldn't be given a choice between money or relationship. We need to get rid of the penalty. Telling someone they are going to have to lose their benefits just because they go through with a marriage isn't right.

My friends shouldn't have to get a divorce to have enough money to live.

Raising the income for individuals will be helpful for me because it will help me to get ahead, as long as it isn't just taken up by my rent.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony. I will be available to answer questions by email.

Sincerely,

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