

May 1, 2023

Chairman Baldacci, Chairwoman Meyer, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Alan Cobo-Lewis. I live in Orono. I am testifying **FOR LD 1666**, An Act to Modernize the State Supplement to Supplemental Security Income by Updating the State Supplement and Removing Marriage Disincentives.

I have two young adult sons, one of whom has autism, who needs significant services and supports, and who has received SSI since turning 19.

My son receives a state SSI supplement. It is \$10—a paltry sum on top of his already modest \$914 federal monthly SSI benefit.

This \$10 is far below the \$65.52 average monthly payment to single SSI recipients among the 22 states that provide such assistance (see Figure 1).

The \$10 arrives on an EBT card. It is such a small amount that he has to either wait months to use it or track the amount left on the card very carefully. And he does not have the skills to track the amount left very carefully.

Maine has set as a goal increasing the independence of people with disabilities. It has begun implementation through adopting state rules in alignment with the federal Home and Community Based Services settings rule. And it seems poised for further implementation through development of a lifespan waiver, which at least holds the promise of tailoring supports to the level of need.

Yet having such a pitiful state SSI supplement to single people living independently and couples living independently flies in the face of the goals of independence, as Maine's state SSI supplement is substantially higher for people not living independently.

Maine's low SSI supplement hardly incentivizes independent living.

LD 1666 would modernize Maine's SSI supplements for people on SSI living independently by:

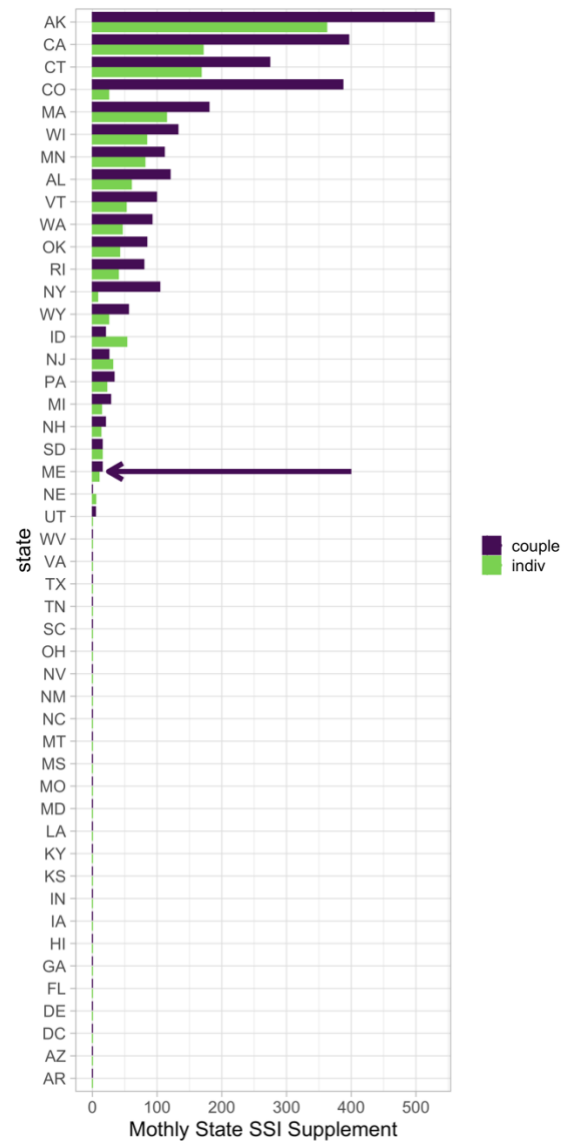


Figure 1. State monthly SSI supplement to couples and individuals living independently. An arrow points to Maine's.

- Raising the monthly payment to individuals on SSI living independently \$65 (essentially at the mean among the 22 states that provide the benefit to single people in this population),
- Raising the monthly payment to couples on SSI living independently to \$130 (essentially at the mean among the 22 states that provide the benefit to couples in this population),
- Indexing the state supplement to cost of living in essentially the same manner as the federal benefit is indexed (so we don't go another 50 years without an adjustment),
- Setting the payment to married couple both of whom receive SSI at double the payment for a single person (to stop disincentivizing marriage and start promoting marriage equality for people with disabilities), and
- Updating the existing statutory set of priorities for any increased expenditure to reflect the state's goals of promoting independent living.