

March 17, 2025

Chairman Ingwersen, 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 834**, An Act to Update the State Supplement to Supplemental Security Income.

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 monthly state SSI supplement. It is \$10—a paltry sum on top of his already modest \$967 federal monthly SSI benefit.

This is poverty-level assistance.

When SSI began over 50 years ago, the state supplement in Maine was about 7% of the federal contribution. The federal and state contributions still totaled poverty-level, but at least the federal contribution increased annually due to cost-of-living adjustments. But the state supplement never increased, so it is now only about 1% of the federal contribution.

Maine's \$10 is also 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.

Post-covid, in fall 2024 he recently had to resume paying MaineCare co-pays for prescription medications. These co-pays alone are more than double the \$10.

LD 834 would modernize Maine's SSI supplements for people on SSI living independently by:

- Raising the monthly payment to individuals on SSI living independently to \$65 (essentially at the mean among the 22 states that provide the benefit to single people in this population), and
- 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).

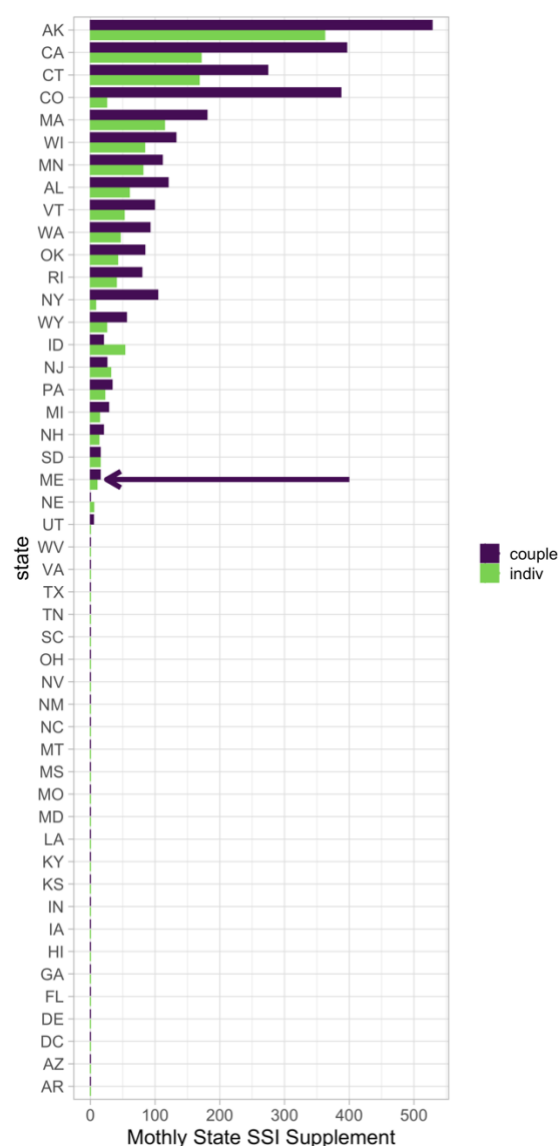


Figure 1. State monthly SSI supplement to couples and individuals living independently. An arrow points to Maine's.