

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 Stephanie Pelletier and I live in Fort Kent. I am a self-advocate and currently serve on the Board of Directors of Speaking Up For Us as the Vice Chair. I am a person who lives with a disability and also someone who has lost all of my SSI income because of the marriage penalty.

I want the committee to know that I want this bill to pass because people with disabilities need income to actually live so they can buy clothes and food. The marriage penalty has greatly impacted my life and for awhile I felt like I was useless because I have no money.

When I got married we called social security and they said I would get \$200 but they were just guessing how much income I would still get. After we called them again, they then told me I would only get \$8. Living costs have went up and then I earned \$14. Then I received a paper in the mail that they were taking that away to \$0. That is unfair. They took the income away because I got married. Because my spouse who is a person with a disability expanded his working hours, they took it away.

I also want to share that after my spouse worked more hours, we got another letter in the mail for social security saying he has to pay \$200 back, and I would also have to pay \$200 back. They said that he needed to send his pay stubs, and at one point he had forgot to send it. I still have to pay back even though I didn't receive any money from social security. This is unfair.

My spouse, Kile wants me to be able to be independent and pay for my own things, but right now he has to pay for them out of his money. He has to pay for my clothes and my hygiene products. I would like income to be able to pay for food, clothes and hygiene stuff for myself and not only Kile paying.

I would say that it is unfair that people who get married with a disability have to lose their income. It is unfair to have no income and be dependent on someone else. It makes me feel lower than low as a person. It is very unfair.

Kile and I have done a lot of advocating about this. We even met with a lawyer about this who told us to get divorced and just live together and not be married anymore. This is not an okay solution for me because this would go against my personal values. I am Catholic and if I lived together without being married under God's eyes, it would be considered a sin.

If this bill passes, then I will at least get some money to buy my clothes and hygiene stuff for myself.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Pelletier  
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