



March 17, 2025

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair  
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair  
Committee on Health and Human Services  
Cross Office Building, Room 209  
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 834: An Act to Update the State Supplement to Supplemental Security Income

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Staci Converse and I am a managing attorney at Disability Rights Maine. DRM is Maine's designated Protection and Advocacy agency, and our mission is to advance justice and equality by enforcing rights and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 834.

Currently, Mainers who receive SSI also receive a state supplement of \$8 per month, while couples receive an additional \$12. This bill would increase the state supplement for individuals to \$65 and eliminate the 50% marriage penalty.

Many individuals with disabilities live in extreme poverty, and this increase would provide much-needed financial relief. Additionally, it would remove the marriage penalty, which unfairly reduces benefits for married couples compared to two unmarried individuals.

For too long, people with disabilities have faced significant obstacles to marriage, many stemming from outdated and ableist beliefs that they should not—or could not—form romantic relationships. These barriers have no place in our society. Marriage should be a personal choice, not a financial risk. Eliminating systemic policies that discourage marriage, including financial penalties, is a necessary step toward equity. No one should be forced to choose between financial stability and the right to marry.

While LD 834 will not resolve all these issues, it is a meaningful step in the right direction. Among other things, it removes the state-imposed marriage penalty, ensuring that couples are not financially penalized for their commitment to one another.

For these reasons, DRM supports LD 834 and urges this Committee to vote "ought to pass."

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Staci Converse". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal line at the end.

Staci Converse