



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 840: An Act to Modernize the State  
Supplement to Supplemental Security Income by Removing Marriage  
Disincentives

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 840.

For individuals currently receiving SSI benefits who choose to marry, benefits will be cut so that they collectively receive only 150% of what they were receiving as individuals. Two unmarried individuals who each receive \$975 per month (SSI plus the state supplement) would have a collective household income of \$1,950 per month. However, if they choose to marry, the same couple would instead receive only \$1,462 per month. This reduction is commonly referred to as the "marriage penalty." It is time to remove this disincentive to marry, and this bill, which would end the marriage penalty for the state supplement, is a good place to start.

Individuals with disabilities have historically faced many barriers to marriage, both large and small. Many of these barriers are rooted in the ableist notion that disabled people couldn't—or shouldn't—engage in romantic relationships. This notion is incorrect. People with disabilities can and should have the same opportunities to engage in relationships, including marriage for those who wish to pursue it. We should be working to eliminate systemic barriers that prevent people with disabilities from marrying, and that includes removing financial disincentives. Single individuals who are already relegated to poverty-level income should not face further cuts if they choose to marry.

LD 840 will certainly not solve the issue, but it is a step in the right direction. It removes the state marriage penalty by eliminating the benefit reduction imposed on couples who marry.

For these reasons, DRM supports LD 840, and we urge this Committee to vote ought to pass.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Staci", followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends to the right.

Staci K. Converse