

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
OHIO, EASTERN DIVISION

Jessica Thornton v. Commissioner of Social Security

Case No. 1:25-CV-00713-JRA (N.D. Ohio Nov. 25, 2025) · No. 1:25-CV-00713-JRA · Decided November 25, 2025

SUMMARY

This Report and Recommendation addresses Jessica Thornton’s challenge to the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of disability insurance benefits. The magistrate judge recommends affirming the Commissioner’s decision, concluding that the administrative law judge’s treatment of Listing 5.08 and the medical opinions was supported by substantial evidence and that any error concerning the listing’s duration requirement was harmless.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Darrell A. Clay
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
DECIDED	November 25, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-CV-00713-JRA
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Report and recommendation on judicial review of the Commissioner's final decision denying disability insurance benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court must affirm the Commissioner's decision unless the Commissioner failed to apply the correct legal standards or the factual findings are unsupported by substantial evidence. The court reviews the record as a whole, may not reweigh evidence or make credibility determinations, and must reverse when the agency fails to follow its regulations or fails to build an accurate and logical bridge between the evidence and the result.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unknown
PARTIES	Jessica Thornton v. Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

disability definition

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability benefits

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ's misinterpretation of Listing 5.08's requirement concerning the timing of BMI evaluations required remand.
2. Whether the ALJ adequately evaluated the consistency and supportability of Dr. Ignat's medical opinion.
3. Whether the ALJ failed to explain the omission of a vertigo-related limitation from the residual functional capacity assessment despite finding Dr. Saghafi's opinion persuasive.
4. Whether the ALJ adequately evaluated Thornton's subjective symptoms under SSR 16-3p.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ relied on an outdated version of Listing 5.08 by applying a six-month rather than a twelve-month period for the required BMI evaluations, but the error was harmless because Thornton did not establish the separate requirement that her weight loss resulted from a digestive disorder despite adherence to prescribed treatment.
2. The ALJ adequately substantively engaged with the supportability and consistency factors when finding Dr. Ignat's extreme limitations unpersuasive.
3. The ALJ was not required to explain omission of a separate vertigo limitation because Dr. Saghafi did not identify functional limitations expressly tied to vertigo, and the RFC did not conflict with the functional capacities stated in his opinion.
4. The ALJ adequately evaluated Thornton's subjective symptoms by comparing her allegations with objective findings, treatment history, medication history, and gaps in treatment, and substantial evidence supported the resulting symptom evaluation.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"For the reasons below, I recommend the District Court AFFIRM the Commissioner's decision." (Conclusion and Recommendation)

"The court cannot reweigh the same evidence before the ALJ and arrive at a different conclusion." (Discussion Part III)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Thornton alleged disability beginning December 31, 2015, based on rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, lumbar radiculopathy, gastritis, and other physical and mental conditions. Relevant medical evidence showed low body-mass-index readings, rheumatoid arthritis with mild synovitis, chronic lumbosacral radiculopathy, generally

normal strength and gait findings, and largely normal spinal imaging. She testified that pain, dizziness, numbness, fatigue, headaches, and concentration problems limited her ability to work full time, although she was working approximately 20 hours per week at a grocery store.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Thornton applied for disability insurance benefits, and her application was denied initially and on reconsideration. After an administrative hearing, an ALJ found her not disabled; the Appeals Council remanded for further evaluation. A second ALJ again found her not disabled, and the opinion states that the Appeals Council denied review, making the ALJ's decision the Commissioner's final decision. Thornton timely filed this action, which was referred to Magistrate Judge Darrell A. Clay for a report and recommendation.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

None. The magistrate judge recommended that the district court affirm the Commissioner's decision denying disability insurance benefits.

CASES CITED

- Walters v. Commissioner of Social Security, 127 F.3d 525, 528-29 (6th Cir. 1997)
- McClanahan v. Commissioner of Social Security, 474 F.3d 830, 833 (6th Cir. 2006)
- Besaw v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 966 F.2d 1028, 1030 (6th Cir. 1992)
- Brooks v. Commissioner of Social Security, 531 F. App'x 636, 641 (6th Cir. 2013)
- Brainard v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 889 F.2d 679, 681 (6th Cir. 1989)
- Jones v. Commissioner of Social Security, 336 F.3d 469, 477 (6th Cir. 2003)
- Mullen v. Bowen, 800 F.2d 535, 545 (6th Cir. 1986)
- Wilson v. Commissioner of Social Security, 378 F.3d 541, 546-47 (6th Cir. 2004)
- Smith-Johnson v. Commissioner of Social Security, 579 F. App'x 426, 432-33 (6th Cir. 2014)
- McClellan v. Astrue, 804 F. Supp. 2d 678, 688 (E.D. Tenn. 2011)
- Reeves v. Commissioner of Social Security, 618 F. App'x 267, 275 (6th Cir. 2015)
- Stacey v. Commissioner of Social Security, 451 F. App'x 517, 519 (6th Cir. 2011)
- Cormany v. Kijakazi, No. 5:21-cv-933, 2022 WL 4115232, at *3 (N.D. Ohio Sept. 9, 2022)
- Paradinovich v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 1:20-cv-1888, 2021 WL 5994043, at *7 (N.D. Ohio Sept. 28, 2021), report and recommendation adopted, 2021 WL 5119354 (N.D. Ohio Nov. 4, 2021)
- Kinney v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 23-3889, 2024 WL 2273365, at *3 (6th Cir. May 20, 2024)
- Aerial T. v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 2:23-cv-04188, 2025 WL 798367, at *3 (S.D. Ohio Mar. 13, 2025)

- Horn v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 1:13-cv-610, 2014 WL 5107598, at *4 (S.D. Ohio Oct. 10, 2014)
- Buckhanon ex rel. J.H. v. Astrue, 368 F. App'x 674, 678-79 (6th Cir. 2010)
- Strong v. Social Security Administration, 88 F. App'x 841, 846 (6th Cir. 2004)
- Zingale v. Kijakazi, No. 1:20-cv-2197, 2022 WL 824148, at *8 (N.D. Ohio Mar. 18, 2022)
- Berkshire v. Dahl, 928 F.3d 520, 530 (6th Cir. 2019)
- Howard v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 932 F.2d 505, 509 (6th Cir. 1991)
- Overholt v. Green, No. 1:17-cv-186, 2018 WL 3018175, at *2 (W.D. Ky. June 15, 2018)
- United States v. Wandahsega, 924 F.3d 868, 878-79 (6th Cir. 2019)

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