

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF OREGON

Joshua F. v. Commissioner, Social Security Administration

Case No. 6:24-cv-01767-YY (D. Or. Dec. 29, 2025) · No. 6:24-cv-01767-YY · Decided December 29, 2025

SUMMARY

The U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon reviews the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of the plaintiff’s applications for Disability Insurance Benefits and Supplemental Security Income. The court concludes that the ALJ improperly evaluated the plaintiff’s symptom testimony, a medical opinion, and lay witness testimony. The decision is reversed and remanded for further administrative proceedings rather than an immediate award of benefits.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Oregon
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Youlee Yim You
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Oregon
DECIDED	December 29, 2025
DOCKET	6:24-cv-01767-YY
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner's final decision denying his applications for Disability Insurance Benefits and Supplemental Security Income. The court reversed the Commissioner's decision and remanded for further administrative proceedings.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court must affirm the Commissioner's decision if it applies proper legal standards and is supported by substantial evidence. The court must consider evidence supporting and detracting from the ALJ's conclusion but may not substitute its judgment where the evidence reasonably supports either affirmance or reversal. An ALJ must provide specific, clear, and convincing reasons supported by substantial evidence to reject a claimant's symptom testimony when there is no affirmative evidence of malingering; medical opinions must be evaluated for persuasiveness with explanation of supportability and consistency; and lay testimony must be rejected for germane reasons.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential district court opinion

PARTIES

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ provided legally sufficient reasons supported by substantial evidence for discounting plaintiff's subjective symptom testimony.
2. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated the persuasiveness of Jenny Tausch, APRN's medical opinion under 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.1520c and 416.920c.
3. Whether the ALJ provided a germane reason for discounting plaintiff's mother's lay witness testimony.
4. Whether the record required remand for an immediate award of benefits under the credit-as-true doctrine or instead required further administrative proceedings.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ failed to provide specific, clear, and convincing reasons supported by substantial evidence for discounting plaintiff's subjective symptom testimony.
2. The ALJ erred in finding Tausch's medical opinion unpersuasive because the ALJ failed adequately to consider the treatment context, the record as a whole, and the supportability and consistency of the opinion.
3. The ALJ failed to provide a germane reason for discounting plaintiff's mother's lay witness testimony.
4. The case must be remanded for further administrative proceedings rather than an immediate award of benefits.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A single treatment note is insufficient to impeach plaintiff's testimony where the record otherwise contains ample evidence supporting plaintiff's claimed difficulty leaving his house." (Tr. 23-27)

"The ALJ failed to consider the context and setting in evaluating Tausch's opinion." (Tr. 25-27)

"The Commissioner's decision is REVERSED and REMANDED for further proceedings consistent with this opinion." (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Joshua F. alleged disability based primarily on anxiety, panic attacks, agoraphobia, social phobia, PTSD, and ADHD. He testified that panic attacks occurred at least daily, could last thirty to sixty minutes, impaired his ability to focus and function, and made leaving home and maintaining employment difficult. The record contained treatment notes documenting anxiety, pacing, difficulty leaving home without a family member, and only partial or temporary improvement with treatment. Jenny Tausch, APRN, who had treated plaintiff sixteen times over approximately five months, opined that plaintiff had marked or extreme work-related limitations and would miss more than four days of work per month.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Administrative Law Judge found that plaintiff had severe mental impairments but retained the residual functional capacity to perform a full range of work with nonexertional limitations. The ALJ found plaintiff unable to perform past relevant work but able to perform jobs existing in significant numbers in the national economy, and therefore found him not disabled. Plaintiff challenged the ALJ's evaluation of his symptom testimony, a medical opinion, and lay witness testimony. The district court reversed and remanded because the ALJ failed to provide legally sufficient reasons for discounting the evidence and because unresolved gaps and ambiguities prevented an immediate award of benefits.

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Commissioner must conduct further proceedings consistent with the opinion, including adequately evaluating plaintiff's subjective symptom testimony, Jenny Tausch's medical opinion, and the lay witness testimony of plaintiff's mother.

CASES CITED

- Lewis v. Astrue, 498 F.3d 909, 911 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Garrison v. Colvin, 759 F.3d 995, 1009-10, 1017, 1020-21 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Lingenfelter v. Astrue, 504 F.3d 1028, 1035 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Parra v. Astrue, 481 F.3d 742, 746 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Tommasetti v. Astrue, 533 F.3d 1035, 1038 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Smolen v. Chater, 80 F.3d 1273, 1281 (9th Cir. 1996)
- Dodrill v. Shalala, 12 F.3d 915, 918 (9th Cir. 1993)
- Orteza v. Shalala, 50 F.3d 748, 750 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Lambert v. Saul, 980 F.3d 1266, 1277 (9th Cir. 2020)
- Thomas v. Barnhart, 278 F.3d 947, 959 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Ahearn v. Saul, 988 F.3d 1111, 1117 (9th Cir. 2021)
- Vertigan v. Halter, 260 F.3d 1044, 1050 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Reddick v. Chater, 157 F.3d 715, 722 (9th Cir. 1998)

- Urban v. Saul, 808 F. App'x 453, 455 (9th Cir. 2020)
- Dennis R. v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. C20-5836 RAJ, 2021 WL 2328374, at *2 (W.D. Wash. June 8, 2021)
- Warre v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration, 439 F.3d 1001, 1006 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Woods v. Kijakazi, 32 F.4th 785, 791-92 (9th Cir. 2022)
- Tyrone W. v. Saul, No. 3:19-CV-01719-IM, 2020 WL 6363839, at *6-7 (D. Or. Oct. 28, 2020)
- Linda F. v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration, No. C20-5076-MAT, 2020 WL 6544628, at *2 (W.D. Wash. Nov. 6, 2020)
- Stiffler v. O'Malley, 102 F.4th 1102, 1107 (9th Cir. 2024)
- Karen W. v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration, 2025 WL 654113, at *8 (D. Or. Feb. 28, 2025)
- Benecke v. Barnhart, 379 F.3d 587, 590, 593 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Dominguez v. Colvin, 808 F.3d 403, 407-08 (9th Cir. 2015), as amended (Feb. 5, 2016)
- Treichler v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration, 775 F.3d 1090, 1100 (9th Cir. 2014)

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