

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
OHIO

Nathan M. Ahrens v. Summit County Clerk of Courts, et al.

Ahrens · No. 5:26-cv-00100 · Decided February 24, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio dismissed Nathan M. Ahrens's pro se civil rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). The court held that the allegations were incomprehensible, that the Rooker–Feldman doctrine barred review of state-court rulings, and that certain defendants were immune or not state actors under § 1983. The court also denied the motion for temporary and preliminary injunctive relief and certified that an appeal could not be taken in good faith.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John R. Adams
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio
DECIDED	February 24, 2026
DOCKET	5:26-cv-00100
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se plaintiff brought a civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, moved to proceed in forma pauperis, and sought temporary and preliminary injunctive relief. The district court granted in forma pauperis status, screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), dismissed the complaint sua sponte, and denied injunctive relief.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the court must screen an in forma pauperis complaint and dismiss it before service if it is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. Pro se pleadings receive liberal construction, but pro se litigants must satisfy basic pleading requirements. A complaint must contain sufficient factual matter to state a plausible claim and provide fair notice of the claims and their grounds.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court memorandum opinion and order; precedential status is unknown.

PARTIES

Nathan M. Ahrens v. Summit County Clerk of Courts, Judge Susan Baker Ross, Portage Path Psychiatric Emergency Services

TOPICS

section 1983 civil rights subject matter jurisdiction motions to dismiss injunctions

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil rights Federal jurisdiction Civil procedure Appellate procedure Remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a plausible federal claim and satisfied basic federal notice-pleading requirements.
2. Whether the Rooker-Feldman doctrine deprived the district court of jurisdiction over claims seeking review or reversal of state-court decisions.
3. Whether Judge Ross and the Summit County Clerk of Courts were immune from damages liability under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for acts performed in their official judicial or quasi-judicial functions.
4. Whether Portage Path Psychiatric Emergency Services could be sued under § 1983 absent allegations that it acted under color of state law.
5. Whether plaintiff was entitled to temporary or preliminary injunctive relief.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint was properly dismissed because its allegations were so unclear and incomprehensible that they failed to meet basic federal notice-pleading requirements and did not suggest a plausible federal claim against any defendant.
2. The Rooker-Feldman doctrine barred the district court from exercising jurisdiction over claims alleging error in the state-court decisions, and plaintiff was required to seek relief in the Ohio appellate courts.
3. Judge Ross and the Summit County Clerk of Courts were entitled to absolute immunity from a damages suit under § 1983 for actions taken in the performance of their official functions in state-court proceedings.
4. Portage Path Psychiatric Emergency Services could not be subjected to § 1983 liability absent facts showing that it acted under color of state law.
5. The motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction was denied because the underlying complaint was dismissed and did not present a viable claim warranting injunctive relief.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Federal district courts do not stand as appellate courts for decisions of state courts.” (3)

“It is well established that judges and other court officers enjoy absolute immunity from suit on claims arising out of the performance of judicial or quasi-judicial functions.” (3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Nathan Ahrens filed a pro se § 1983 action against the Summit County Clerk of Courts, Judge Susan Baker Ross, and Portage Path Psychiatric Emergency Services. The complaint appeared to challenge rulings and the reopening of a case in two state-court proceedings involving Portage Path. Ahrens sought millions of dollars in damages and an order staying the state-court proceeding identified as Case No. CV-2025-11-5527.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Ahrens filed a § 1983 complaint challenging rulings in state-court cases and sought millions of dollars in damages and a stay of one state-court proceeding. He also moved to proceed in forma pauperis and for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction. The court granted in forma pauperis status, dismissed the complaint before service under § 1915(e)(2)(B), denied the injunction motion, and certified that an appeal could not be taken in good faith.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Ahrens v. Psychiatric Emergency Services, No. CV-2025-11-5527 (Summit Cty. Ct. of Common Pleas)
- Ahrens v. Portage Path Emergency Services, No. CV-2024-04-1734 (Summit Cty. Ct. of Common Pleas)
- Williams v. Curtin, 631 F.3d 380, 383 (6th Cir.)
- Pilgrim v. Littlefield, 92 F.3d 413, 416 (6th Cir.)
- Erwin v. Edwards, 22 F. App'x 579, 580 (6th Cir.)
- Hill v. Lappin, 630 F.3d 468, 470-71 (6th Cir.)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662 (2009)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)
- Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N.A., 534 U.S. 506, 514 (2002)
- Lillard v. Shelby Cty. Bd. of Educ., 76 F.3d 716, 726 (6th Cir.)
- Hall v. Callahan, 727 F.3d 450, 453 (6th Cir.)
- Foster v. Walsh, 864 F.2d 416, 417 (6th Cir.)
- Adams v. Vandemark, 855 F.2d 312, 317 (6th Cir.)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO Nathan M. Ahrens,)
CASE NO. 5:26 CV 100) Plaintiff,)) v.) JUDGE JOHN R. ADAMS) Summit Count Clerk of
Courts, et al.,)) MEMORANDUM OF OPINION Defendants.) AND ORDER Background Pro
se Plaintiff Nathan Ahrens has filed a civil rights complaint in this case under 42 U.S.C. § 1983
against the Summit County Clerk of Courts, Judge Susan Baker Ross, and Portage Path
Psychiatric Emergency Services (Doc.

No. 1), along with a “Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction” (Doc. No. 3). His complaint and his motion, however, are incomprehensible. As best as the Court is able to discern, Plaintiff disagrees with rulings made by Judge Ross in cases he filed in state court against Portage Path Psychiatric Emergency Services. See *Ahrens v. Psychiatric Emergency Services*, No. CV-2025-11-5527 (Summit Cty.

Ct. of Comm. Pls.); *Ahrens v. Portage Path Emergency Services*. No. CV-2024-04-1734 (Summit Cty. Ct. of Comm. Pls.).¹ He seeks millions of dollars in damages and for the Court to stay all proceedings in Case No. CV-2025-11-5527. (See Doc. No. 1 at 3, ¶V, “Prayer for Relief”; Doc. No. 3 at 2.)¹ It appears he contends his rights were violated as the result of the re-opening of a case.

Plaintiff did not pay the filing fee, but instead, filed a motion to proceed in forma pauperis. (Doc. No. 2.) That motion is granted. For the following reasons, his complaint is dismissed. Discussion Although the standard of review for pro se pleadings is liberal, *Williams v. Curtin*, 631 F.3d 380, 383 (6th Cir. 2011), “the lenient treatment generally accorded pro se litigants has limits.” *Pilgrim v. Littlefield*, 92 F.3d 413, 416 (6th Cir.

1996). Pro se plaintiffs must still meet basic pleading requirements, and courts are not required to conjure allegations or construct claims on their behalf. See *Erwin v. Edwards*, 22 F. App’x 579, 580 (6th Cir. 2001). Federal district courts are expressly required, under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) (B), to screen all in forma pauperis complaints brought in federal court, and to dismiss before service any such action that the court determines is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.

See *Hill v. Lappin*, 630 F.3d 468, 470-71 (6th Cir. 2010). To survive a dismissal for failure to state a claim, a complaint must set forth “sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Id.* (holding that the dismissal standard articulated in *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 (2009) and *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007) governs dismissals for failure to state a claim under §1915(e)(2)(B)).

The “allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555. Additionally, they must be sufficient to give the defendants “fair notice of what [the plaintiff’s] claims are and the grounds upon which they rest.” *Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N.A.*, 534 U.S. 506, 514 (2002). Upon review, the Court finds that Plaintiff’s complaint warrants sua sponte dismissal pursuant to § 1915(e)(2)(B).

First, even according his pleadings the deference to which a pro se ² plaintiff is entitled, his allegations are so unclear and incomprehensible that they fail to meet basic federal notice pleading

requirements or suggest he has any plausible federal claim against any Defendant upon which he may be granted relief (much less that he is likely to succeed on the merits of such claim).

See *Lillard v. Shelby Cty. Bd. of Educ.*, 76 F.3d 716, 726 (6th Cir. 1996) (a court is not required to accept summary allegations or unwarranted conclusions in determining whether a complaint states a claim for relief). Further, the Rooker–Feldman doctrine “prevents a federal court from exercising jurisdiction over a claim alleging error in a state court decision.” *Hall v. Callahan*, 727 F.3d 450, 453 (6th Cir.

2013) (citation omitted). “Federal district courts do not stand as appellate courts for decisions of state courts.” *Id.* Accordingly, this Court lacks jurisdiction to review or reverse any decision of the Summit County Court of Common Pleas in connection with cases Plaintiff filed in state court as it is apparent he seeks.

To the extent Plaintiff disagrees with rulings made by Judge Ross in state court cases, he must seek relief in the Ohio appellate courts. Finally, Judge Ross and the Summit Court Clerk of Courts are entitled to absolute immunity from a damages suit under § 1983 for any actions they took in the performance of their official functions in state court proceedings.

See *Foster v. Walsh*, 864 F.2d 416, 417 (6th Cir. 1988) (“It is well established that judges and other court officers enjoy absolute immunity from suit on claims arising out of the performance of judicial or quasi-judicial functions.”) And private entities (such as Defendant Portage Path Psychiatric Emergency Services) are not subject to suit under § 1983 in the absence of facts demonstrating they acted under color of state law.

See *Adams v. Vandemark*, 855 F.2d 312, 317 (6th Cir. 1988). 3 Conclusion For all of the foregoing reasons, Plaintiff’s complaint is dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), and his motion for temporary and preliminary injunctive relief is denied.

The Court further certifies, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3), that an appeal from this decision could not be taken in good faith. IT IS SO ORDERED. Date: February 23, 2026 /s/ John R. Adams
JOHN R. ADAMS UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE 4