

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
NORTH CAROLINA, STATESVILLE DIVISION

Ann Hartline, O/B/O K.H. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of
Social Security

Hartline · No. 5:24-CV-00261-KDB · Decided March 27, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina reviewed the denial of supplemental security income benefits sought on behalf of a minor claimant. The court held that the Administrative Law Judge applied the correct legal standards and that substantial evidence supported the finding that the claimant did not have a marked limitation in attending and completing tasks. The court granted the Commissioner’s motion, denied the appeal, and affirmed the Commissioner’s decision.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina, Statesville Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Kenneth D. Bell
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina, Statesville Division
DECIDED	March 27, 2026
DOCKET	5:24-CV-00261-KDB
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner's final administrative decision denying a minor claimant's application for supplemental security income.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court must affirm if the ALJ applied the correct legal standards and the decision is supported by substantial evidence. The court does not review de novo, reweigh conflicting evidence, make credibility determinations, or substitute its judgment for that of the ALJ.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Ann Hartline, O/B/O K.H. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

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administrative law

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PRACTICE AREAS

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ erred by finding that K.H. had less than a marked limitation in the domain of attending and completing tasks.
2. Whether the Commissioner's denial of supplemental security income was supported by substantial evidence and applied the correct legal standards.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ's finding was supported by substantial evidence because the record contained evidence that K.H. completed assignments, participated in class, asked questions, had largely low-average scores in relevant neuropsychological measures, received conservative treatment, and performed daily activities inconsistent with a marked limitation.
2. The court did not reach the acquiring-and-using-information domain because Plaintiff did not allege an extreme limitation and therefore challenged only whether the two domains had marked limitations.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The scope of review under § 405(g) is limited; the Commissioner’s decision must be upheld “if the ALJ applied correct legal standards and if the factual findings are supported by substantial evidence.”” (at 3)

“In reviewing for substantial evidence” in support of an ALJ’s factual findings, “[the reviewing court] do[es] not undertake to reweigh conflicting evidence, make credibility determinations, or substitute [its] judgment for that of the [ALJ].” (at 4)

“Put simply, the ALJ balanced the conflicting evidence in the record to reach a conclusion that a reasonable mind could accept as sufficient.” (at 7)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

K.H., a minor, applied for supplemental security income alleging disability beginning April 9, 2007. The ALJ found severe impairments including ADHD, borderline intellectual functioning, depression, and developmental delay, but found no marked limitation in the domain of attending and completing tasks. The ALJ relied on school performance, neuropsychological testing, conservative ADHD treatment, medication history, and daily activities in evaluating the functional-equivalence domains.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Ann Hartline applied on behalf of her grandson, K.H., for supplemental security income. The claim was denied initially and on reconsideration; following an administrative hearing, an ALJ denied the application on October 24, 2023, and the Appeals Council denied review on October 22, 2024. The district court reviewed the administrative record and affirmed the Commissioner's decision, denied the appeal, granted the Commissioner's motion to affirm, and ordered the case closed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Drumgold v. Comm'r of Soc. Sec., 144 F.4th 596, 604 (4th Cir. 2025)
- Biestek v. Berryhill, 587 U.S. 97, 102-03 (2019)
- Metcalf v. Schweiker, 795 F.2d 343, 345 (4th Cir. 1986)
- Hays v. Sullivan, 907 F.2d 1453, 1456 (4th Cir. 1990)
- Johnson v. Barnhart, 434 F.3d 650, 653 (4th Cir. 2005)
- Boing v. Raleigh & G.R. Co., 87 N.C. 360 (N.C. 1882)
- Sedar v. Reston Town Ctr. Prop., LLC, 988 F.3d 756 (4th Cir. 2021)
- Hancock v. Astrue, 667 F.3d 470, 472 (4th Cir. 2012)
- Shinaberry v. Saul, 952 F.3d 113, 123 (4th Cir. 2020)
- Lester v. Schweiker, 683 F.2d 838, 841 (4th Cir. 1982)
- Long v. Kijakazi, No. 1:22-CV-00091-KDB, 2022 WL 18026331, at *2-3 (W.D.N.C. Dec. 30, 2022)
- Drumgold v. Comm'r of Soc. Sec., 144 F.4th 596, 605 (4th Cir. 2025)