

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

Lucyna M. v. Frank Bisignano

Case No. 23-cv-15358 · No. 23-cv-15358 · Decided February 3, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois reviewed the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of Lucyna M.’s application for disability insurance benefits. The court held that the ALJ adequately considered the claimant’s multiple sclerosis, pain, fatigue, and mental impairments, properly evaluated the treating neurologist’s opinion, and supported the residual functional capacity determination with substantial evidence. The court granted the Commissioner’s motion for summary judgment.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sharon Johnson Coleman
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois
DECIDED	February 3, 2026
DOCKET	23-cv-15358
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Action under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) seeking judicial review of the Commissioner's final decision denying disability insurance benefits; the plaintiff moved for reversal and the Commissioner moved for summary judgment affirming the administrative decision.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews whether the ALJ's decision is supported by substantial evidence and whether the ALJ applied the correct legal standards. The court may not reweigh the evidence or substitute its judgment for the ALJ's, but must remand for insufficient evidentiary support, inadequate discussion, or legal error.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished federal district court memorandum opinion; nonprecedential value not expressly stated in the opinion.
PARTIES	Lucyna M. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

agency adjudication

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the plaintiff's challenge to the residual functional capacity determination failed because she did not identify specific additional restrictions.
2. Whether the ALJ adequately incorporated plaintiff's fatigue and chronic pain into the residual functional capacity determination.
3. Whether the ALJ improperly cherry-picked evidence or failed to build a logical bridge from the evidence to the conclusion that plaintiff was not disabled.
4. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated and explained the treatment of the treating neurologist's medical-source opinion.

HOLDINGS

1. A claimant is not subject to an automatic threshold dismissal merely because the brief does not specify every additional RFC restriction; the record and briefing must instead provide a basis for determining what restrictions should be included if remand is warranted.
2. The ALJ adequately considered and incorporated plaintiff's fatigue and chronic pain into the RFC by limiting her to sedentary work, restricting climbing and exposure to hazards, limiting her to simple instructions in a routine setting, and excluding production-paced work with strict hourly quotas.
3. The ALJ did not improperly cherry-pick the evidence and provided a sufficient logical bridge between the evidence and the RFC and nondisability conclusions.
4. The ALJ properly evaluated Dr. Katsamakis's opinion by rejecting legal conclusions reserved to the Commissioner and finding the remaining functional limitations unsupported and inconsistent with the record, including the doctor's own clinical examinations.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“What is needed, then, is not necessarily a briefed argument for specific restrictions, but rather a basis for determining such restrictions, if they are to be added on remand.” (Discussion § I)

“This is exactly the sort of recognition of an inability “to complete a task consistently over the course of a workday” that Lucy alleges the ALJ failed to take into consideration, and it is therefore fatal to her argument.” (Discussion § II)

“The ALJ’s opinion and the record before this Court do not show any such issues.” (Discussion § IV)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged disability from multiple sclerosis, migraines, depression, anxiety, chronic pain, and fatigue during the period from December 1, 2015, through December 31, 2020, when she was last insured. The ALJ found severe impairments but determined that plaintiff retained the residual functional capacity for sedentary work with postural, environmental, cognitive, and production-pace restrictions. The medical record reflected generally stable neurological examinations, few relapses, and treatment that was generally helpful, although plaintiff reported persistent pain and fatigue. The district court concluded that the ALJ considered those symptoms, adequately evaluated the medical opinions, and supported the decision with substantial evidence.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a Title II application for disability insurance benefits alleging disability beginning December 1, 2015. The application was denied initially and on reconsideration. After a March 27, 2023 hearing, the ALJ found plaintiff not disabled on April 12, 2023. The Appeals Council denied review, making the ALJ's decision the Commissioner's final decision. The district court granted the Commissioner's motion for summary judgment and affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Nelms v. Astrue, 553 F.3d 1093, 1097 (7th Cir. 2009)
- Surprise v. Saul, 968 F.3d 658, 661-62 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Villano v. Astrue, 556 F.3d 558, 562 (7th Cir. 2009)
- Sheila W. v. Saul, 395 F. Supp. 3d 974, 978 (N.D. Ill. 2019)
- Lopez ex rel. Lopez v. Barnhart, 336 F.3d 535, 539 (7th Cir. 2003)
- Jozefyk v. Berryhill, 923 F.3d 492, 497-98 (7th Cir. 2019)
- United States v. Crawley, 837 F.2d 291, 292 (7th Cir. 1988)
- Sarnoff v. American Home Products Corp., 798 F.2d 1075, 1084 (7th Cir. 1986)
- Weaver v. Berryhill, 746 F. App'x 574, 579 (7th Cir. 2018)
- Cynthia T. v. Saul, No. 18 C 50288, 2020 WL 564223, at *6 (N.D. Ill. Feb. 5, 2020)
- Yurt v. Colvin, 758 F.3d 850, 857 (7th Cir. 2014)
- Martin v. Saul, 950 F.3d 369, 373-74 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Crump v. Saul, 932 F.3d 567, 570 (7th Cir. 2019)
- DeCamp v. Berryhill, 916 F.3d 671, 675-76 (7th Cir. 2019)
- Moreno v. Berryhill, 882 F.3d 722, 730 (7th Cir. 2018)
- Reinaas v. Saul, 953 F.3d 461, 467 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Briscoe ex rel. Taylor v. Barnhart, 425 F.3d 345, 351 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Herron v. Shalala, 19 F.3d 329, 333-34 (7th Cir. 1994)
- Meuser v. Colvin, 838 F.3d 905, 912 (7th Cir. 2016)

- Spicher v. Berryhill, 898 F.3d 754, 758 (7th Cir. 2018)
- Clifford v. Apfel, 227 F.3d 863, 873-74 (7th Cir. 2000)
- Schomas v. Colvin, 732 F.3d 702, 707-08 (7th Cir. 2013)
- McKinzey v. Astrue, 641 F.3d 884, 892 (7th Cir. 2011)

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