

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

K.B. v. Commissioner of Social Security

No. 24-cv-06218-VKD (N.D. Cal. Sept. 30, 2025) · No. 24-cv-06218-VKD · Decided September 30, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California reviewed a final decision denying K.B.'s applications for disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income. The court held that substantial evidence supported the ALJ's findings that K.B.'s COPD and asthma were non-severe impairments and that the ALJ adequately considered those conditions in determining the residual functional capacity. The court affirmed the ALJ's decision and ordered the case closed.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Virginia K. DeMarchi
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	September 30, 2025
DOCKET	24-cv-06218-VKD
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Action under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) seeking judicial review of the Commissioner's final decision denying applications for disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), the court reviews the Commissioner's decision for substantial evidence and legal error, examining the administrative record as a whole and deferring to the Commissioner's rational interpretation where the evidence supports more than one rational interpretation.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	K.B. v. Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

- judicial review of agency action
- agency adjudication
- administrative law
- ada / disability

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability benefits

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether substantial evidence supported the ALJ's finding that K.B.'s COPD and asthma were non-severe impairments.
2. Whether the ALJ failed to consider the exertional effects of K.B.'s COPD and asthma when determining her residual functional capacity.

HOLDINGS

1. Substantial evidence supported the ALJ's finding that K.B.'s COPD and asthma were non-severe because the conditions produced no more than mild functional limitations and did not significantly limit her ability to perform basic work activities.
2. The ALJ did not err in determining K.B.'s residual functional capacity because the ALJ expressly considered COPD and asthma and their associated symptoms and limitations, even though the ALJ did not translate those non-severe impairments into additional exertional restrictions.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Commissioner’s decision will be disturbed only if it is not supported by substantial evidence or if it is based upon the application of improper legal standards.” (at 2)

“Where evidence exists to support more than one rational interpretation, the Court must defer to the decision of the Commissioner.” (at 2)

“An impairment or combination of impairments can be found not severe only if the evidence establishes a slight abnormality that has no more than a minimal effect on an individual’s ability to work.” (at 3)

“While the regulations require the ALJ to consider the effect of all of a claimant’s impairments in formulating the RFC, they do not require her to translate every non-severe impairment into a functional limitation in the RFC.” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

K.B. applied for disability insurance benefits and SSI, alleging disability from hypertension, hypothyroidism, a brain aneurysm, COPD, asthma, post-traumatic stress disorder, migraines, and generalized anxiety disorder. The ALJ found major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and polysubstance abuse severe, but found COPD and asthma non-severe because they were managed with medication and had not significantly limited basic work activities. The ALJ nevertheless considered all impairments in determining that K.B. retained the residual functional capacity for work at all exertional levels with specified non-exertional limitations.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

K.B. applied for disability insurance benefits and SSI, and the applications were denied initially and on reconsideration. Following an administrative hearing, the ALJ issued an unfavorable decision on December 19,

2023, finding that K.B.'s COPD and asthma were non-severe and that she could perform work existing in significant numbers in the national economy. The Appeals Council denied review, and K.B. filed this action. The district court affirmed the ALJ's decision and ordered the case closed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Ahearn v. Saul, 988 F.3d 1111, 1115-16 (9th Cir. 2021)
- Morgan v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration, 169 F.3d 595, 599 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Biestek v. Berryhill, 587 U.S. 97, 103 (2019)
- Molina v. Astrue, 674 F.3d 1104, 1110-11 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Hammock v. Bowen, 879 F.2d 498, 501 (9th Cir. 1989)
- Webb v. Barnhart, 433 F.3d 683, 686 (9th Cir. 2005)
- Smolen v. Chater, 80 F.3d 1273, 1290 (9th Cir. 1996)
- Tackett v. Apfel, 180 F.3d 1094, 1098 (9th Cir. 1999)
- D.L.P. v. Kijakazi, No. 21-cv-00792-VKD, 2022 WL 4472064, at *3 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 26, 2022)
- Medlock v. Colvin, No. 15-cv-9609-KK, 2016 WL 6137399, at *5 (C.D. Cal. Oct. 20, 2016)