

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

Frederick T. v. Commissioner of Social Security

Civil Action No. 25-1421 (RK) (D.N.J. Dec. 29, 2025) · No. Civil Action No. 25-1421 (RK) · Decided December 29, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of New Jersey affirmed the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of Frederick T.’s application for disability insurance benefits. The court held that the Administrative Law Judge adequately evaluated the alleged impairments at Step Two and supported the residual functional capacity determination with substantial evidence. The court also concluded that any potential errors in classifying certain impairments were harmless because their symptoms were considered in the RFC assessment.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of New Jersey
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Robert Kirsch
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of New Jersey
DECIDED	December 29, 2025
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 25-1421 (RK)
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) from the Commissioner of Social Security's final decision denying disability insurance benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews the Commissioner's final decision for substantial evidence and compliance with applicable law. It may not reweigh the evidence or substitute its own factual determinations for those of the ALJ.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Frederick T. v. Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

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

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

disability benefits

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ properly assessed Frederick's medically determinable impairments and the severity or determinability of his alleged immunoglobulin A deficiency, migraines, chronic fatigue syndrome, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.
2. Whether the ALJ's residual functional capacity determination was supported by substantial evidence.
3. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated the medical opinions of Dr. Charles Peeples and therapist Anne Scherbina.
4. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated Frederick's subjective testimony concerning the intensity, persistence, and limiting effects of his symptoms.

HOLDINGS

1. Any technical omission or misclassification at Step Two was harmless because the ALJ found other severe impairments, continued through the sequential analysis, and considered the symptoms and functional effects of the challenged conditions in determining the residual functional capacity.
2. The ALJ's RFC determination was supported by substantial evidence.
3. The ALJ adequately evaluated the medical opinions by addressing their supportability and consistency, and the rejection of the opinions was supported by substantial evidence.
4. The ALJ properly discounted the alleged intensity, persistence, and limiting effects of Frederick's symptoms because his statements were not fully consistent with the medical and other evidence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"The scope of the Court's review of the ALJ's decision is "quite limited." (at 8)

"The Step Two inquiry thus operates as "a de minimis screening device to dispose of groundless claims." (at 11)

"The Court concludes that Judge Mastrangelo's evaluation of Dr. Peeples' medical opinions was supported by substantial evidence and provided "sufficient information to understand the ALJ's basis for rejection." (at 15-16)

"Thus, Judge Mastrangelo's conclusion that Frederick's subjective complaints were inconsistent with the record is supported by substantial evidence." (at 20)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Frederick alleged disability based on numerous physical and mental impairments, including asthma, obesity, depressive disorder, anxiety, PTSD, bipolar disorder, hearing impairment, migraines, immunoglobulin A deficiency, and chronic fatigue syndrome. The ALJ found seven severe impairments, but determined that migraines were non-severe and that chronic fatigue syndrome, pseudodementia, autism spectrum disorder,

obsessive-compulsive disorder, and immunoglobulin A deficiency were either not medically determinable or not separately severe. The ALJ nevertheless considered the symptoms and related medical evidence in determining that Frederick retained the residual functional capacity for medium work with environmental, social, and cognitive restrictions. Relying on vocational-expert testimony, the ALJ concluded that Frederick could perform jobs existing in significant numbers in the national economy.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Frederick applied for disability insurance benefits in May 2022, alleging disability beginning January 1, 2017. The Administration denied the application initially and on reconsideration. After a February 2024 hearing, the ALJ found Frederick not disabled, and the Appeals Council denied review. Frederick then sought judicial review in the District of New Jersey; the court affirmed the Commissioner's decision without oral argument.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- *Torres v. Kijakazi*, No. 21-18424, 2023 WL 6890851, at *2 n.3 (D.N.J. Oct. 19, 2023)
- *Matthews v. Apfel*, 239 F.3d 589, 592 (3d Cir. 2001)
- *Zirnsak v. Colvin*, 777 F.3d 607, 610 (3d Cir. 2014)
- *Rutherford v. Barnhart*, 399 F.3d 546, 552-53 (3d Cir. 2005)
- *Morales v. Apfel*, 225 F.3d 310, 316 (3d Cir. 2000)
- *Plummer v. Apfel*, 186 F.3d 422, 427 (3d Cir. 1999)
- *Biestek v. Berryhill*, 587 U.S. 97, 103 (2019)
- *Chandler v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 667 F.3d 356, 359, 363 (3d Cir. 2011)
- *Fargnoli v. Massanari*, 247 F.3d 34, 38 (3d Cir. 2001)
- *Schaudeck v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration*, 181 F.3d 429, 431 (3d Cir. 1999)
- *Cotter v. Harris*, 642 F.2d 700, 706-07 (3d Cir. 1981)
- *McCrea v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 370 F.3d 357, 360 (3d Cir. 2004)
- *Hess v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 931 F.3d 198, 201 (3d Cir. 2019)
- *Salles v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 229 F. App'x 140, 145 n.2 (3d Cir. 2007)
- *Vanessa T-H v. Commissioner of Social Security*, No. 23-2293, 2024 WL 1635685, at *3-*4 (D.N.J. Apr. 16, 2024)
- *Friday v. Commissioner of Social Security*, No. 20-4504, 2021 WL 3879081, at *4 (D.N.J. Aug. 31, 2021)
- *Kangas v. Bowen*, 823 F.2d 775, 777-78 (3d Cir. 1987)
- *Hur v. Barnhart*, 94 F. App'x 130, 133 (3d Cir. 2004)
- *Ivana M. v. Commissioner of Social Security*, No. 20-7263, 2021 WL 4772139, at *6-*7 (D.N.J. Oct. 13, 2021)
- *Zaborowski v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 115 F.4th 637, 639 (3d Cir. 2024)

- Emilia N. v. Commissioner of Social Security, Civ. No. 21-18677, 2022 WL 14834594, at *4 (D.N.J. Oct. 26, 2022)
- Burnett v. Commissioner of Social Security, 220 F.3d 112, 121 (3d Cir. 2000)
- Fullen v. Commissioner of Social Security, 705 F. App'x 121, 125 (3d Cir. 2017)
- Tricia W. v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 24-11499, 2025 WL 3033994, at *6 (D.N.J. Oct. 30, 2025)
- Pyle v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 23-815, 2024 WL 4278291, at *1 n.1 (W.D. Pa. Sept. 24, 2024)
- Flores v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 15-6356, 2016 WL 4689948, at *13 (D.N.J. Sept. 6, 2016)
- Jones v. Barnhart, 264 F.3d 501, 505 (3d Cir. 2004)
- Thompson v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 12-4755, 2013 WL 5476432, at *6 n.3 (D.N.J. Sept. 28, 2013)
- Hoyman v. Colvin, 606 F. App'x 678, 681 (3d Cir. 2015)
- Bieber v. Department of the Army, 287 F.3d 1358, 1364 (Fed. Cir. 2002)

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