

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

Samuel L. Kawecki v. Commissioner of Social Security

Case No. 4:25-CV-00933-DAP (N.D. Ohio Jan. 12, 2026) · No. 4:25-CV-00933-DAP · Decided January 12,
2026

SUMMARY

This Report and Recommendation addresses Samuel L. Kawecki’s challenge to the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of Disability Insurance Benefits and Supplemental Security Income. The magistrate judge concludes that the ALJ’s failure to expressly address the supportability of state-agency medical and psychological opinions was harmless because the RFC adopted the consultants’ limitations and imposed additional restrictions. The recommendation is that the district court affirm the Commissioner’s final decision.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Jennifer Dowdell Armstrong, U.S. Magistrate Judge
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
DECIDED	January 12, 2026
DOCKET	4:25-CV-00933-DAP
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Report and recommendation on a claimant's action under 42 U.S.C. §§ 405(g) and 1383(c)(3) seeking review of the Commissioner's denial of Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews whether the Commissioner's decision is supported by substantial evidence and was made pursuant to proper legal standards. The court may not uphold a decision where the ALJ failed to follow applicable regulations or failed to build an accurate and logical bridge between the evidence and the result.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

agency adjudication

administrative law

ada / disability

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security

administrative law

disability benefits

judicial review of agency action

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ's failure to expressly address the supportability of the state-agency medical consultants' opinions was harmless when the RFC adopted their restrictions and added further limitations.
2. Whether the ALJ adequately evaluated the state-agency psychologists' opinions and whether any deficiency was harmless because the RFC fully encompassed their stated limitations.
3. Whether the ALJ was required to determine the materiality of Kawecki's substance-use disorder under SSR 13-2p when the ALJ found him not disabled even considering all impairments.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ failed to address the supportability factor adequately, but the error was harmless because the RFC adopted the restrictions identified by the state-agency medical consultants and imposed additional manipulative limitations.
2. Any inadequacy in the ALJ's explanation of the supportability and consistency of the state-agency psychologists' opinions was harmless because the RFC fully encompassed the limitations identified by those psychologists.
3. The ALJ was not required to perform a drug-addiction-and-alcoholism materiality determination under SSR 13-2p because the ALJ found Kawecki not disabled even when considering his substance-use disorder and all other impairments.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Court’s review “is limited to determining whether the Commissioner’s decision is supported by substantial evidence and was made pursuant to proper legal standards.”” (Section V.A)

“But because the ALJ adopted the restrictions contained in those opinions—and, in fact, incorporated additional manipulative restrictions beyond those the state agency medical consultants identified—Mr. Kawecki was not harmed by the ALJ’s imperfect decision.” (Section V.C.1)

“A DAA materiality determination is only made when there is both evidence establishing a substance use disorder and ‘we find that the claimant is disabled considering all impairments, including the DAA.’” (Section V.C.2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Kawecki alleged disability based on compartment syndrome and related muscle-removal surgery, diabetes with neuropathy and retinopathy, lumbar degenerative disease, PTSD, depression, anxiety, and substance-use disorders. State-agency medical consultants opined that he could perform a restricted range of light work, while state-agency psychologists found no more than moderate mental limitations. The ALJ adopted an RFC incorporating the consultants' functional restrictions and additional manipulative limitations, and vocational-expert testimony identified jobs available in significant numbers in the national economy.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Kawecki applied for DIB and SSI, and the Social Security Administration denied his applications initially and on reconsideration. After a hearing, the ALJ found him not disabled on March 28, 2024; the Appeals Council denied further review on March 25, 2025, making the ALJ's decision final. Kawecki filed this action on May 8, 2025, challenging the ALJ's evaluation of state-agency medical and psychological opinions. The magistrate judge recommended affirmance, subject to objections and de novo review by the district judge.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Olive v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 3:06 CV 1597, 2007 WL 5403416, at *2 (N.D. Ohio Sept. 19, 2007)
- Abbott v. Sullivan, 905 F.2d 918, 922-23 (6th Cir. 1990)
- Mullen v. Bowen, 800 F.2d 535, 538 (6th Cir. 1986) (en banc)
- Winn v. Commissioner of Social Security, 615 F. App'x 315, 320 (6th Cir. 2015)
- Cole v. Astrue, 661 F.3d 931, 937 (6th Cir. 2011)
- Biestek v. Berryhill, 139 S. Ct. 1148, 1154 (2019)
- White v. Commissioner of Social Security, 572 F.3d 272, 281 (6th Cir. 2009)
- Bowen v. Commissioner of Social Security, 478 F.3d 742, 746 (6th Cir. 2007)
- Fleischer v. Astrue, 774 F. Supp. 2d 875, 877 (N.D. Ohio 2011)
- Sarchet v. Chater, 78 F.3d 305, 307 (7th Cir. 1996)
- Kirk v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 667 F.2d 524 (6th Cir. 1981)
- Merrell v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 1:20-cv-769, 2021 WL 1222667, at *6 (N.D. Ohio Mar. 16, 2021), report and recommendation adopted, 2021 WL 1214809 (N.D. Ohio Mar. 31, 2021)
- Lavenia v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 3:21cv674, 2022 WL 2114661, at *2 (N.D. Ohio June 13, 2022)
- Coston v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 20-12060, 2022 WL 989471, at *3 (E.D. Mich. Mar. 31, 2022)
- Njegovan v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration, No. 5:21-CV-00002-CEH, 2022 WL 1521910, at *4 (N.D. Ohio May 13, 2022)

- Croft v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 3:22-CV-00511, 2022 WL 17717495, at *8 (N.D. Ohio Nov. 10, 2022)
- Wilson v. Commissioner of Social Security, 378 F.3d 541, 547 (6th Cir. 2004)
- Roberts v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 3:22-CV-00051-CEH, 2023 WL 4243225, at *17 (N.D. Ohio Jan. 23, 2023)
- Miller v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 1:24-CV-378-JPC, 2024 WL 4985903, at *9 (N.D. Ohio Dec. 5, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2025 WL 957566 (N.D. Ohio Mar. 31, 2025)
- Troyan v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 1:24-CV-02040-DAP, 2025 WL 2437255, at *12 (N.D. Ohio Aug. 25, 2025), report and recommendation adopted, 2025 WL 2605401 (N.D. Ohio Sept. 9, 2025)
- Reeves v. Commissioner of Social Security, 618 F. App'x 267, 275 (6th Cir. 2015)
- Monateri v. Commissioner of Social Security, 436 F. App'x 434, 446 (6th Cir. 2011)
- Kasarnich v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 5:24-cv-01130, 2025 WL 2676550, at *5 (N.D. Ohio Sept. 18, 2025)
- Dozier v. O'Malley, No. 3:24-cv-00180, 2025 WL 627214, at *5 (M.D. Tenn. Feb. 26, 2025)
- Berkshire v. Dahl, 928 F.3d 520, 530 (6th Cir. 2019)
- Howard v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 932 F.2d 505, 509 (6th Cir. 1991)
- Overholt v. Green, No. 1:17-CV-00186, 2018 WL 3018175, at *2 (W.D. Ky. June 15, 2018)
- United States v. Wandahsega, 924 F.3d 868, 878-79 (6th Cir. 2019)