

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
WASHINGTON

Fernando Javier H. v. Commissioner of Social Security
Administration

No. 1:25-CV-03069-SAB, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington (January 23, 2026)

SUMMARY

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington reversed the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of benefits to Fernando Javier H. The court held that the administrative law judge improperly evaluated the medical opinions and Plaintiff’s subjective symptom testimony, and remanded for an immediate award of benefits.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington
JURISDICTION	U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington
DECIDED	January 23, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-CV-03069-SAB
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner's final decision denying disability benefits. The district court reviewed the administrative record and party briefs, reversed the Commissioner's decision, and remanded for an immediate award of benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court sets aside the Commissioner's determination only if the ALJ's findings are based on legal error or are not supported by substantial evidence in the record as a whole. The court must uphold a decision supported by substantial evidence if the evidence is susceptible to more than one rational interpretation, but must reverse when the proper legal standards were not applied.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished, nonprecedential
PARTIES	Fernando Javier H. v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

disability definition

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

federal judicial review

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated the medical opinions of Dr. Morgan and Dr. Renee Eisenhower under the applicable Social Security regulations.
2. Whether the ALJ provided legally sufficient reasons supported by substantial evidence for discounting Plaintiff's subjective symptom testimony.
3. Whether the improperly discounted evidence, if credited as true, required remand for an immediate award of benefits rather than further administrative proceedings.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ erred in finding Dr. Morgan's opinion unsupported and inconsistent with the longitudinal record; that determination was not supported by substantial evidence.
2. The ALJ erred in finding Dr. Eisenhower's opinion unpersuasive on the ground that she reviewed only Dr. Morgan's evaluation and adopted it.
3. The ALJ failed to provide specific, clear, and convincing reasons supported by substantial evidence for discounting Plaintiff's testimony concerning the severity and limiting effects of his symptoms.
4. Because the improperly discredited evidence, if credited as true, required a finding of disability and no further record development was necessary, remand for an immediate award of benefits was appropriate.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"The clear and convincing standard is the most demanding required in Social Security cases." (Opinion at 9)

"There is no need to develop the record or convene further administrative proceedings." (Opinion at 11)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, age 42 at the time of the hearing, had prior work as a paraeducator and behavioral specialist. He alleged that severe anxiety, panic attacks, depression, and related alcohol use prevented him from working beginning in 2020. He reported frequent panic attacks, difficulty driving and interacting in public, and reliance on his parents for transportation and errands. The ALJ found severe anxiety, depressive, and alcohol-use disorders but determined that Plaintiff could perform limited work and identified jobs available in significant numbers in the national economy.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff applied for Title II disability insurance benefits and Title XVI supplemental security income benefits. The applications were denied initially and on reconsideration; following a telephonic hearing, the ALJ found Plaintiff not disabled on May 9, 2024. The Appeals Council denied review on March 28, 2025, making the ALJ's

decision final. Plaintiff filed this action on May 20, 2025, and the district court reversed and remanded for an immediate award of benefits.

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Reverse the Commissioner's decision and remand for an immediate award of benefits. Enter judgment for Plaintiff against Defendant and close the file.

CASES CITED

- Keyes v. Sullivan, 894 F.2d 1053, 1057 (9th Cir. 1990)
- Tackett v. Apfel, 108 F.3d 1094, 1098 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Matney v. Sullivan, 981 F.2d 1016, 1018-19 (9th Cir. 1992)
- Richardson v. Perales, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971)
- Sorenson v. Weinberger, 514 F.2d 1112, 1119 n.10 (9th Cir. 1975)
- Brawner v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 839 F.2d 432, 433 (9th Cir. 1988)
- Stout v. Commissioner, Social Security Administration, 454 F.3d 1050, 1055 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Batson v. Barnhart, 359 F.3d 1190, 1193 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Revels v. Berryhill, 874 F.3d 648, 654 (9th Cir. 2017)
- Garrison v. Colvin, 759 F.3d 995, 1014, 1022 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Thomas v. Barnhart, 278 F.3d 947, 959 (9th Cir. 2002)