

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

Sanders v. Prince, et al.

Sanders v. Prince, No. 3:25cv234 (M.D. Pa. Jan. 2, 2026) · No. No. 3:25cv234 · Decided January 2, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania grants a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss claims against two medical defendants in a prisoner civil-rights action alleging inadequate medical care. The court concludes that the defendants, as current or former Wellpath employees, are protected by the third-party release and injunction in Wellpath’s confirmed Chapter 11 bankruptcy plan because the plaintiff did not timely opt out. The claims are dismissed without prejudice to pursuing appropriate relief through the bankruptcy court, and amendment in the district court is deemed futile.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Julia K. Munley
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	January 2, 2026
DOCKET	No. 3:25cv234
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff brought a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action alleging inadequate medical care in prison. Medical defendants moved to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), relying on a confirmed Chapter 11 plan and its third-party release and injunction. The court deemed the motion unopposed and granted it, dismissing the claims against the medical defendants without prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations and reasonable inferences as true and views them in the light most favorable to the plaintiff, disregards mere legal conclusions, and determines whether the complaint states a facially plausible claim for relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum; nonprecedential

PARTIES

Alphonso Sanders v. Dr. Scott Prince, Mark Abel, Jason Bohinsky,
Erica Benning, Kate Conmy

TOPICS

prisoners rights

section 1983

bankruptcy

motions to dismiss

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner medical care

bankruptcy

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Sanders's claims against Wellpath employees were barred by the third-party release and injunction in Wellpath's confirmed Chapter 11 plan because Sanders did not timely opt out.
2. Whether the claims against the medical defendants should be dismissed without prejudice and without leave to amend because amendment would be futile.

HOLDINGS

1. Sanders's claims against Prince and Abel were barred by the third-party release and permanent injunction contained in Wellpath's confirmed Chapter 11 plan because the claims arose before the bankruptcy petition date and Sanders did not timely opt out.
2. Leave to amend was denied because amendment would be futile; the claims against the medical defendants were dismissed without prejudice to Sanders's right to pursue appropriate relief through the bankruptcy court.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Absent any information that Sanders opted out of the Third-Party Release or otherwise took action in the bankruptcy court, the claims against the medical defendants are barred by the injunction contained in the confirmed Chapter 11 bankruptcy plan, and the court will grant the medical defendants' motion to dismiss."
(at 9)

"The claims against the medical defendants will be dismissed without prejudice to Sanders' right to pursue appropriate relief through the bankruptcy court." (at 10)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Sanders alleged that beginning in May 2022 he suffered from sciatica and lower-back and leg pain while incarcerated at SCI Dallas. He claimed that Mark Abel prescribed medications that conflicted with other medications and caused adverse effects, that Dr. Scott Prince denied his request for a cane on security grounds, and that other treatment, including Icy Hot and physical therapy, did not resolve his symptoms. Sanders sought pain medication, an MRI, monetary relief, and litigation costs.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Sanders filed suit concerning medical treatment at SCI Dallas. The court previously stayed proceedings against Prince and Abel because of Wellpath's Chapter 11 bankruptcy and later lifted the stay after the bankruptcy court lifted the automatic stay. The court had separately ruled on the DOC defendants' motion and afforded Sanders an opportunity to amend, but Sanders did not amend. After Sanders failed to oppose the medical defendants' motion or provide evidence that he opted out of Wellpath's third-party release, the court dismissed the claims against Prince and Abel without prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Kanter v. Barella, 489 F.3d 170, 177 (3d Cir. 2007)
- Evancho v. Fisher, 423 F.3d 347, 350 (3d Cir. 2005)
- Oshiver v. Levin, Fishbein, Sedran & Berman, 38 F.3d 1380, 1384 n. 2 (3d Cir. 1994)
- In re Burlington Coat Factory Securities Litigation, 114 F.3d 1410, 1426 (3d Cir. 1997)
- Phillips v. County of Allegheny, 515 F.3d 224, 232 (3d Cir. 2008)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555-56 (2007)
- Santiago v. Warminster Township, 629 F.3d 121, 130-31 (3d Cir. 2010)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 675, 678-79 (2009)
- Fowler v. UPMC Shadyside, 578 F.3d 203, 210-11 (3d Cir. 2009)
- In re Wellpath Holdings, Inc., No. 4:24-bk-90533 (Bankr. S.D. Tex.)