

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

Joseph M. Cline v. Commissioner of Social Security

Cline · No. 5:25-CV-00349 · Decided January 21, 2026

SUMMARY

This Report and Recommendation addresses Joseph M. Cline’s challenge to the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of his application for Supplemental Security Income. The magistrate judge recommends affirming the Commissioner’s decision, concluding that the ALJ properly evaluated Cline’s impairments, residual functional capacity, symptoms, and ability to perform other work in the national economy. The recommendation rejects Cline’s arguments concerning obesity, diabetic neuropathy, the step-three listing analysis, and the light-work RFC finding.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Jonathan D. Greenberg
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division
DECIDED	January 21, 2026
DOCKET	5:25-CV-00349
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Report and recommendation on judicial review of the Commissioner's final decision denying Supplemental Security Income benefits under Title XVI of the Social Security Act.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews the Commissioner's decision to determine whether it is supported by substantial evidence and was made under proper legal standards. The court may not reweigh the evidence, make credibility determinations, or reverse merely because substantial evidence could support a different conclusion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Joseph M. Cline v. Commissioner of Social Security

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ adequately considered Cline's diabetes, diabetic neuropathy, and obesity in combination at step three of the sequential evaluation.
2. Whether the ALJ's residual functional capacity finding for a reduced range of light work was supported by substantial evidence.
3. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated the intensity, persistence, and limiting effects of Cline's symptoms under Social Security Ruling 16-3p.
4. Whether the ALJ adequately incorporated the limitations identified in psychologist Dr. Krabbe's opinion into the residual functional capacity assessment.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ did not err in finding that Cline's impairments, alone or in combination, did not meet or medically equal a listed impairment.
2. The ALJ's finding that Cline could perform a reduced range of light work was supported by substantial evidence.
3. The ALJ properly evaluated Cline's symptoms under the required two-step process, and the finding that his statements were not entirely consistent with the record was supported by substantial evidence.
4. The ALJ adequately incorporated Dr. Krabbe's mental-health limitations into the RFC and was not required to adopt the opinion verbatim.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Specifically, this 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)

“Again, it is the ALJ’s job to weigh the evidence and resolve conflicts, and he did so here.” (Section VI.B)

“The ALJ properly followed the two-step process for evaluating Cline’s symptoms.” (Section VI.C)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Cline alleged disability based on diabetes, diabetic neuropathy, obesity, asthma, shoulder adhesive capsulitis, depression, and anxiety. Medical examinations generally showed normal gait, strength, range of motion, and neurological functioning, although the record documented morbid obesity, heel numbness, shoulder limitations, and mental-health diagnoses. The ALJ found severe diabetes, neuropathy, obesity, asthma, depressive disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder, but determined that Cline retained the residual functional capacity for a

reduced range of light work. A vocational expert testified that a person with that RFC could perform jobs existing in significant numbers in the national economy.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Cline applied for SSI in January 2022. His application was denied initially and on reconsideration; after a January 17, 2024 administrative hearing, the ALJ found him not disabled on February 2, 2024. The Appeals Council denied review on January 6, 2025, making the ALJ's decision final. Cline filed this action on February 20, 2025, and the magistrate judge recommended affirming the Commissioner's decision.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Kirk v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 667 F.2d 524 (6th Cir. 1981)
- Ealy v. Commissioner of Social Security, 594 F.3d 504, 512 (6th Cir. 2010)
- Abbott v. Sullivan, 905 F.2d 918, 923 (6th Cir. 1990)
- Reynolds v. Commissioner of Social Security, 424 F. App'x 411, 414 (6th Cir. 2011)
- Loy v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 901 F.2d 1306, 1310 (6th Cir. 1990)
- Dodson v. Commissioner of Social Security, No. 5:18-cv-02263, 2019 WL 6841771, at *2 (N.D. Ohio Dec. 16, 2019)
- Thacker v. Social Security Administration, 93 F. App'x 725, 727-28 (6th Cir. 2004)
- Buress v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 835 F.2d 139, 140 (6th Cir. 1987)
- Evans v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 820 F.2d 161, 164 (6th Cir. 1987)
- Fleischer v. Astrue, 774 F. Supp. 2d 875, 877, 880 (N.D. Ohio 2011)
- Sarchet v. Chater, 78 F.3d 305, 307 (7th Cir. 1996)
- Her v. Commissioner of Social Security, 203 F.3d 388, 389-91 (6th Cir. 2000)
- 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)
- Mullen v. Bowen, 800 F.2d 535, 545 (6th Cir. 1986)
- Buxton v. Halter, 246 F.3d 762, 772-73 (6th Cir. 2001)
- Gentry v. Commissioner of Social Security, 741 F.3d 708, 724 (6th Cir. 2014)
- Germany-Johnson v. Commissioner of Social Security, 313 F. App'x 771, 777 (6th Cir. 2008)
- Miner v. Commissioner of Social Security, 524 F. App'x 191, 194 (6th Cir. 2013)
- Jones v. Commissioner of Social Security, 336 F.3d 469, 477 (6th Cir. 2003)
- Walters v. Commissioner of Social Security, 127 F.3d 525, 531 (6th Cir. 1997)
- Villarreal v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 818 F.2d 461, 463 (6th Cir. 1987)
- Beavers v. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, 577 F.2d 383, 386-87 (6th Cir. 1978)

- *Ulman v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 693 F.3d 709, 713-14 (6th Cir. 2012)
- *Reeves v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 342 F. App'x 149, 157 (6th Cir. 2009)
- *Berkshire v. Beauvais*, 928 F.3d 520, 530-31 (6th Cir. 2019)

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