

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
TEXAS, EL PASO DIVISION

Ana B. Molina Gonzalez v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social
Security Administration

Molina Gonzalez · No. EP-24-CV-00430-ATB · Decided November 25, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Texas reviews the Social Security Administration’s denial of Ana B. Molina Gonzalez’s claim for disability insurance benefits. The court holds that the Administrative Law Judge properly evaluated Gonzalez’s subjective symptoms and residual functional capacity and that the decision was supported by substantial evidence. The court affirms the Commissioner’s decision.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, El Paso Division
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, El Paso Division
DECIDED	November 25, 2025
DOCKET	EP-24-CV-00430-ATB
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner’s final decision denying disability insurance benefits. The parties consented to disposition by a magistrate judge under 28 U.S.C. § 636(c).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed whether the Commissioner applied the proper legal standards and whether the decision was supported by substantial evidence. The review was highly deferential; the court could not reweigh the evidence, try the issues de novo, or substitute its judgment for the Commissioner’s.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; memorandum opinion from a federal district court, with no published reporter citation identified.

PARTIES

Ana B. Molina Gonzalez v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security Administration

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

agency adjudication

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ improperly evaluated Gonzalez's subjective symptom testimony.
2. Whether substantial evidence supported the ALJ's residual functional capacity finding that Gonzalez could perform the full range of sedentary work.
3. Whether the ALJ impermissibly formulated the RFC from a lay interpretation of medical evidence because the record lacked a medical opinion specifically assessing functional limitations.
4. Whether the ALJ was required to order a consultative examination or contact Gonzalez's treating physicians for additional medical opinions.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ properly evaluated Gonzalez's subjective symptoms, and substantial evidence supported the finding that her statements about the intensity, persistence, and limiting effects of her symptoms were not entirely consistent with the record.
2. The ALJ did not impermissibly rely on a lay interpretation of the medical evidence, and the absence of a medical source statement specifically assigning an RFC did not require reversal.
3. The ALJ was not required to order a consultative examination or obtain additional opinions from Gonzalez's treating physicians because the extensive record enabled an informed disability determination, and Gonzalez bore the burden of proving disability through the RFC stage.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Judicial review, under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), of the Commissioner's decision denying social security benefits is "highly deferential." (Part III)

"The RFC is used in both step four and step five to determine whether the claimant is able to do her past work or other available work." (Part III)

"The ALJ's decision expressly states that it was "[a]fter careful consideration of all the evidence," (Part IV.A)

"What [Gonzalez] characterizes as the ALJ substituting his opinion is actually the ALJ properly interpreting the medical evidence to determine his capacity for work." (Part IV.B)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Gonzalez was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in December 2019, underwent induction therapy and an autologous stem-cell transplant in September 2020, and thereafter remained in complete remission while taking maintenance Revlimid. She alleged disability beginning December 30, 2021, based principally on fatigue, neuropathy, pain, balance problems, and sudden bowel urges. During the relevant period, treatment records documented some neuropathy-like symptoms and occasional fatigue but also reflected remission, generally normal examinations, good or full activity, tolerance of medication, and few reports of disabling limitations.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Gonzalez applied for disability insurance benefits, alleging disability beginning December 30, 2021. The claim was denied initially and on reconsideration; after a hearing, the ALJ found her not disabled. The Appeals Council denied review, making the ALJ's decision the Commissioner's final decision. Gonzalez then filed this action, and the district court affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- *Higginbotham v. Barnhart*, 405 F.3d 332, 336 (5th Cir. 2005)
- *Garcia v. Berryhill*, 880 F.3d 700, 704 (5th Cir. 2018)
- *Kneeland v. Berryhill*, 850 F.3d 749, 753–54 (5th Cir. 2017)
- *Keel v. Saul*, 986 F.3d 551, 555 (5th Cir. 2021)
- *Webster v. Kijakazi*, *Webster v. Kijakazi*, 19 F.4th 715, 718 (5th Cir. 2021)
- *Biestek v. Berryhill*, 587 U.S. 97, 103 (2019)
- *Schofield v. Saul*, 950 F.3d 315, 320 (5th Cir. 2020)
- *Whitehead v. Colvin*, 820 F.3d 776, 779 (5th Cir. 2016)
- *Sun v. Colvin*, 793 F.3d 502, 508 (5th Cir. 2015)
- *Salmond v. Berryhill*, 892 F.3d 812, 817 (5th Cir. 2018)
- *Perez v. Barnhart*, 415 F.3d 457, 461 (5th Cir. 2005)
- *Giles v. Astrue*, 433 F. App'x 241, 249 (5th Cir. 2011)
- *Qualls v. Apfel*, 234 F.3d 30, 2000 WL 1568324, at *1 (5th Cir. 2000)
- *Grotts v. Kijakazi*, 27 F.4th 1273, 1278 (7th Cir. 2022)
- *Clary v. Barnhart*, 214 F. App'x 479, 482 (5th Cir. 2007)
- *Harrell v. Bowen*, 862 F.2d 471, 480 (5th Cir. 1988)
- *Smith v. Barnhart*, 172 F. App'x 36, 36 (5th Cir. 2006)
- *Villa v. Sullivan*, 895 F.2d 1019, 1024 (5th Cir. 1990)
- *Price v. Astrue*, 401 F. App'x 985, 986 (5th Cir. 2010)

- *Castillo v. Barnhart*, 151 F. App'x 334, 335 (5th Cir. 2005)
- *Brunson v. Astrue*, 387 F. App'x 459, 461 (5th Cir. 2010)
- *Hollis v. Bowen*, 837 F.2d 1378, 1384 (5th Cir. 1988)
- *Cauthen v. Saul*, 827 F. App'x 444, 446 (5th Cir. 2020)
- *Prochaska v. Barnhart*, 454 F.3d 731, 738 (7th Cir. 2006)
- *Wilder v. Kijakazi*, 22 F.4th 644, 653 (7th Cir. 2022)
- *Spindel v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration*, 333 F. App'x 174, 176 (9th Cir. 2009)
- *Drea v. Barnhart*, 58 F. App'x 225, 229 (7th Cir. 2003)
- *Ripley v. Chater*, 67 F.3d 552, 557–58 & n.28 (5th Cir. 1995)
- *Williams v. Astrue*, 355 F. App'x 828, 831–32 & n.6 (5th Cir. 2009)
- *Johnson v. Bisignano*, No. 1:25-CV-231-ML, 2025 WL 2900012, at *6 (W.D. Tex. Oct. 9, 2025)
- *Sheridan v. Commissioner of Social Security Administration*, No. 1:18-CV-300-MAC-KFG, 2019 WL 6003297, at *8 (E.D. Tex. Aug. 30, 2019)
- *Baker v. Berryhill*, No. 1:15-CV-00943-MAT, 2018 WL 1173782, at *4 (W.D.N.Y. Mar. 6, 2018)
- *Fontenot v. Colvin*, 661 F. App'x 274, 277 (5th Cir. 2016)
- *Rounds v. Commissioner, Social Security Administration*, 807 F.3d 996, 1006 (9th Cir. 2015)
- *Brown v. Saul*, 858 F. App'x 711, 713 (5th Cir. 2021)
- *Hardman v. Colvin*, 820 F.3d 142, 148 (5th Cir. 2016)
- *Allen v. Kijakazi*, No. 21-30771, 2022 WL 7265517, at *2 (5th Cir. Oct. 12, 2022)