

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

Diane O. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

Diane O. · No. 22 C 6666 · Decided December 22, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois reviewed the denial of Diane O.'s application for Social Security disability insurance benefits. The court held that the administrative law judge did not adequately explain the decision to discount the opinion of Plaintiff's treating psychiatrist when determining her residual functional capacity. The court granted Plaintiff's motion for summary judgment, denied the Commissioner's motion, and remanded for further proceedings.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	LaShonda A. Hunt
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
DECIDED	December 22, 2025
DOCKET	22 C 6666
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner of Social Security's final decision denying her application for disability insurance benefits. The parties filed cross-motions for summary judgment.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews the Commissioner's factual findings for substantial evidence under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), does not reweigh the evidence or substitute its judgment for the ALJ's, and requires the ALJ to build a logical bridge between the evidence and conclusions.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unknown
PARTIES	Diane O. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

agency adjudication

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PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability benefits

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ adequately supported his decision to find Dr. Coleman's medical opinion unpersuasive when determining Plaintiff's residual functional capacity.
2. Whether the ALJ's reasons for discounting Dr. Coleman's opinion were supported by substantial evidence and formed a logical bridge between the evidence and the RFC determination.
3. Whether the ALJ's reliance on vocational-expert testimony concerning simple and routine tasks could render any error harmless.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ failed to adequately explain why Dr. Coleman's opinion was unpersuasive and failed to build a logical bridge between the evidence and the RFC determination.
2. The vocational-expert testimony did not establish that the ALJ's error was harmless because the court did not know what limitations a proper analysis of Dr. Coleman's opinion might require, and catch-all terms such as simple and repetitive tasks may not account for concentration, persistence, or pace limitations.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Improvement in symptoms, however, does not mean that someone is not disabled.”

“The Court finds that, under these circumstances, it is unable to conduct a meaningful review because the ALJ did not build a logical bridge between all of the evidence in the record and his step-four conclusion.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff had fibromyalgia, asthma, conversion disorder with non-epileptic seizure-like events, and related psychological symptoms that began or worsened after witnessing and then experiencing automobile accidents. She received substantial psychotherapy from Dr. Gary Coleman and reported fluctuating seizures, anxiety, pain, and functional limitations. Dr. Coleman opined that she had significant limitations in adaptation, concentration, persistence, and pace, but the ALJ discounted that opinion and relied more heavily on state-agency consultants who had not reviewed Dr. Coleman's extensive treatment records.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Social Security Administration denied Plaintiff's application initially and on reconsideration. After a hearing, an administrative law judge issued an unfavorable decision finding that Plaintiff was not disabled; the Appeals Council denied review, making the ALJ's decision the Commissioner's final decision. Plaintiff timely appealed to the district court, which granted her motion for summary judgment and remanded for further proceedings.

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Remand to the Social Security Administration for further proceedings. The ALJ must adequately explain the weight or persuasiveness assigned to Dr. Coleman's opinion, connect the evidence to the RFC determination through a logical bridge, and reassess the RFC and any resulting vocational evidence.

CASES CITED

- *Gedatus v. Saul*, 994 F.3d 893, 901 (7th Cir. 2021)
- *Biestek v. Berryhill*, 139 S. Ct. 1148, 1154 (2019)
- *Consolidated Edison Co. v. NLRB*, 305 U.S. 197, 229 (1938)
- *Bakke v. Kijakazi*, 62 F.4th 1061, 1066 (7th Cir. 2023)
- *Butler v. Kijakazi*, 4 F.4th 498, 501 (7th Cir. 2021)
- *Denton v. Astrue*, 596 F.3d 419, 425 (7th Cir. 2010)
- *Herron v. Shalala*, 19 F.3d 329, 333 (7th Cir. 1994)
- *Gedatus v. Saul*, 994 F.3d 893, 900 (7th Cir. 2021)
- *Scott v. Astrue*, 647 F.3d 734, 739-740 (7th Cir. 2011)
- *Punzio v. Astrue*, 630 F.3d 704, 710 (7th Cir. 2011)
- *Schmidt v. Astrue*, 496 F.3d 833, 845 (7th Cir. 2007)
- *Crump v. Saul*, 932 F.3d 567, 570 (7th Cir. 2019)