

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

Jhon Caldas v. John Doe

Civil Action No. 26-785 (SDW) (LDW) (D.N.J. Feb. 3, 2026) · No. Civil Action No. 26-785 (SDW) (LDW) ·
Decided February 3, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of New Jersey grants Jhon Caldas's application to proceed in forma pauperis. The court sua sponte dismisses the complaint without prejudice under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) because the sole defendant, identified only as John Doe, was not sufficiently identified, and grants thirty days to file an amended complaint.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of New Jersey
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Susan D. Wigenton
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of New Jersey
DECIDED	February 3, 2026
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 26-785 (SDW) (LDW)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se plaintiff filed a complaint and an application to proceed in forma pauperis. The district court granted in forma pauperis status and screened the complaint sua sponte under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), applying the same failure-to-state-a-claim standard used under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished and nonprecedential
PARTIES	Jhon Caldas v. John Doe

TOPICS

motions to dismiss

pleadings

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiff demonstrated that he was unable to pay the filing fee and therefore qualified to proceed in forma pauperis.
2. Whether the complaint stated a claim when the sole defendant was identified only as an unidentified law enforcement officer.

HOLDINGS

1. Plaintiff qualified to proceed in forma pauperis because his reported income and expenses demonstrated an inability to pay the filing fee.
2. The complaint failed to state a claim because it did not identify the defendant sufficiently for the court to reasonably infer that the defendant was liable for the alleged misconduct.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Therefore, Plaintiff’s IFP Application is GRANTED, and the Complaint is sua sponte DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE.” (Disposition)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff identified the sole defendant only as John Doe, described generally as a law enforcement officer in Union City, New Jersey. The complaint did not otherwise name or identify the defendant sufficiently for the court to assess liability. Plaintiff’s in forma pauperis application reported monthly income of \$350 and monthly expenses of approximately \$809.84.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff’s complaint was received on January 28, 2026, together with his in forma pauperis application. The district court found that plaintiff’s financial information demonstrated inability to pay the filing fee, but concluded that the complaint failed to state a claim because it did not identify a defendant beyond a generic John Doe designation. The complaint was dismissed without prejudice, with thirty days to file an amended complaint.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Plaintiff was granted thirty days to file an amended complaint. The court warned that failure to timely amend may result in dismissal with prejudice.

CASES CITED

- Schreane v. Seana, 506 F. App’x 120, 122 (3d Cir. 2012)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 556 (2007)

OPINION

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY JHON CALDAS, Civil Action No. 26-785 (SDW) (LDW) Plaintiff, WHEREAS OPINION v. February 3, 2026 JOHN DOE, Defendant. WIGENTON, District Judge. THIS MATTER having come before this Court upon pro se Plaintiff Jhon Caldas' Complaint ("Compl.") received on January 28, 2026 (D.E. 1) and Application to Proceed in forma pauperis ("IFP Application") filed on the same day (D.E.

2), and this Court having reviewed Plaintiff's submissions; and WHEREAS a district court may allow a plaintiff to commence a civil action without paying the filing fee—that is, in forma pauperis—so long as the plaintiff demonstrates that he or she is "unable to pay such fees." 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1); and WHEREAS when a litigant petitions the Court to proceed without the prepayment of fees, the Court has an obligation to screen the complaint to determine whether it is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant immune from such relief.

See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B); and WHEREAS the legal standard for failure to state a claim under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) is the same as that applied under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). *Schreane v. Seana*, 506 F. App'x 120, 122 (3d Cir. 2012).

To survive a motion to dismiss, a plaintiff must allege sufficient facts for the court to reasonably infer that the defendant is liable for the alleged misconduct. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (citing *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 556 (2007)). WHEREAS here, the Complaint does not name a Defendant. (Compl. at 2.)

The sole Defendant is "John Doe", who is only identified as a law enforcement officer in Union City, New Jersey. (*Id.*) Without knowing Defendant's identity, this Court cannot reasonably infer that Defendant is liable for the alleged misconduct, and thus the Complaint has failed to state a claim upon which relief can be granted; and WHEREAS Plaintiff's IFP Application indicates that his total monthly income is \$350 and his total monthly expenses are around \$809.84, including utility payments, transportation, health insurance and car installment payments.

(See generally D.E. 2.) This Court will therefore allow Plaintiff to proceed in forma pauperis. Therefore, Plaintiff's IFP Application is GRANTED, and the Complaint is sua sponte DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE. Plaintiff shall have thirty (30) days to file an amended complaint. Failure to timely file an amended complaint may result in the dismissal of this matter with prejudice.

An appropriate order follows. /s/ Susan D. Wigenton SUSAN D. WIGENTON, U.S.D.J. Orig: Clerk cc: Parties Leda D. Wettre, U.S.M.J.

