

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA, ABINGDON DIVISION

April A. Davidson v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

No. 1:25CV00017, United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, Abingdon Division (March 31, 2026)

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia adopted the magistrate judge’s Report and Recommendation in a Social Security disability benefits action. The court denied April A. Davidson’s objection, accepted the recommendation to affirm the Commissioner of Social Security’s decision, and ordered that final judgment be entered.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, Abingdon Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	James P. Jones
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, Abingdon Division
DECIDED	March 31, 2026
DOCKET	1:25CV00017
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The plaintiff sought judicial review of the Commissioner’s final decision denying disability insurance and supplemental security income benefits. After a magistrate judge issued a Report and Recommendation recommending affirmance, the plaintiff filed an objection. The district court conducted de novo review of the objected-to portions and denied the objection, accepted the Report and Recommendation, and directed entry of a separate final judgment.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The district court reviews objected-to portions of a magistrate judge’s report de novo under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) and Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 72(b). It must uphold the ALJ’s factual findings and final decision if supported by substantial evidence and reached through application of the correct legal standard, while ensuring that the ALJ

	builds an accurate and logical bridge from the evidence to the conclusions.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; no precedential-status designation appears in the opinion.
PARTIES	April A. Davidson v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security

administrative law

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the magistrate judge's Report and Recommendation should be accepted after de novo review of the plaintiff's objection.
2. Whether the Commissioner's denial of disability insurance and supplemental security income benefits was supported by substantial evidence and reached through application of the correct legal standard.

HOLDINGS

1. The Report and Recommendation was properly accepted because it accurately resolved the issues presented in the plaintiff's objection.
2. The Commissioner's final decision denying benefits was affirmed because the applicable review standard was satisfied and the magistrate judge correctly resolved the plaintiff's challenges.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Under the Act, I must uphold the factual findings and final decision of the administrative law judge (ALJ) if they are supported by substantial evidence and were reached through application of the correct legal standard.” (at 1)

“It consists of more than a mere scintilla of evidence but may be somewhat less than a preponderance.” (at 1)

“To pass muster, ALJs must build an accurate and logical bridge from the evidence to their conclusions.” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

April A. Davidson sought disability insurance and supplemental security income benefits under the Social Security Act. The Commissioner denied her claim, and the plaintiff challenged that final administrative decision in the district court. The magistrate judge recommended affirming the denial, and the plaintiff's objection repeated the arguments she had presented to the magistrate judge.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The action was referred to Magistrate Judge Pamela Meade Sargent under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B) and Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 72(b). The magistrate judge issued a Report on September 8, 2025, recommending that the Commissioner's decision be affirmed. The plaintiff filed a timely objection on September 19, 2025; the Commissioner did not respond. The district court accepted the Report and Recommendation, denied the objection, and ordered that a separate final judgment be entered.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Coffman ex rel. Estate of Coffman v. Bowen, 829 F.2d 514, 517 (4th Cir. 1987)
- Biestek v. Berryhill, 139 S. Ct. 1148, 1154 (2019)
- Laws v. Celebrezze, 368 F.2d 640, 642 (4th Cir. 1966)
- Arakas v. Comm'r, 983 F.3d 83, 95 (4th Cir. 2020)

OPINION

CLERKS OFFICE US. DIST. AT ABINGDON, VA FILED IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT March 31. 2026 FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA | ayes austin, cLEE ABINGDON DIVISION BY: s/ FELICIA CLARK DEPUTY CLERK APRIL A. DAVIDSON,)) Plaintiff,) Case No. 1:25CV00017)) OPINION AND ORDER) FRANK BISIGNANO,) JUDGE JAMES P. JONES COMMISSIONER OF) SOCIAL SECURITY,)) Defendant.) Joseph E. Wolfe, Wolfe Williams & Austin, Norton, Virginia, for Plaintiff; Wanda D. Mason, Special Assistant United States Attorney, SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, Baltimore, Maryland, for Defendant.

In this social security disability case, I will accept the Report and Recommendation (Report) of the magistrate judge. The plaintiff challenges the final decision of the Commissioner of Social Security (Commissioner) denying her claim for disability insurance and supplemental security income benefits under provisions of the Social Security Act (Act).

The action was referred to United States Magistrate Judge Pamela Meade Sargent to conduct appropriate proceedings. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b). Magistrate Judge Sargent filed her 52-page Report on September 8, 2025, in which she recommended that the court affirm the Commissioner’s decision denying benefits.

On September 19, 2025, the plaintiff filed a timely Objection to the Report. The Commissioner has not filed a response to the Objection and accordingly the Objection is ripe for decision. I must

make a de novo determination of those portions of the Report to which the plaintiff objects. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b).

Under the Act, I must uphold the factual findings and final decision of the administrative law judge (ALJ) if they are supported by substantial evidence and were reached through application of the correct legal standard. *Coffman ex rel. Estate of Coffman v. Bowen*, 829 F.2d 514, 517 (4th Cir. 1987). “[T]he threshold for such evidentiary sufficiency is not high.” *Biestek v. Berryhill*, 139 S. Ct.

1148, 1154 (2019). Substantial evidence is “evidence which a reasoning mind would accept as sufficient to support a particular conclusion. It consists of more than a mere scintilla of evidence but may be somewhat less than a preponderance.” *Laws v. Celebrezze*, 368 F.2d 640, 642 (4th Cir. 1966). If such evidence exists, my inquiry is terminated, and the Commissioner’s final decision must be affirmed. /d.

But I may not “reflexively rubber-stamp an ALJ’s findings.” *Arakas v. Comm’r*, 983 F.3d 83, 95 (4th Cir. 2020) (citation omitted). “To pass muster, ALJs must build an accurate and logical bridge from the evidence to their conclusions.” /d. (internal quotation marks and citations omitted). _2- In her Objection, the plaintiff makes the same arguments as she presented to the magistrate judge.

After careful review, I find that the Report accurately resolved the issues presented and must be accepted. Accordingly, it is ORDERED as follows: 1. The plaintiffs Objection, ECF No. 15, is DENIED; 2. The magistrate judge’s Report and Recommendations, ECF No. 14, is fully ACCEPTED; and 3. A separate final judgment will be entered herewith. ENTER: March 31, 2026 /s/_ JAMES P. JONES Senior United States District Judge _3-