

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

Cynthia A. Gilbert v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social
Security

Gilbert v. Bisignano · No. 4:24-CV-00540 · Decided March 24, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania reviewed the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of Cynthia A. Gilbert’s claim for disability insurance benefits. The court held that the administrative law judge’s residual functional capacity determination was supported by substantial evidence and affirmed the Commissioner’s decision.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sean A. Camoni
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	March 24, 2026
DOCKET	4:24-CV-00540
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Action under 42 U.S.C. § 1383(c)(3), incorporating 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), for judicial review of the Commissioner's final decision denying disability and disability insurance benefits. The parties consented to magistrate-judge jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 636(c) and Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 73.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews the Commissioner's final decision to determine whether it is supported by substantial evidence and whether the correct legal standards were applied. The court may not reweigh evidence or substitute its judgment for that of the fact-finder, and reversal is warranted only when the evidence supports a contrary conclusion and compels it. The ALJ must articulate the reasons for the decision sufficiently to permit judicial review.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum opinion; precedential status unknown

PARTIES

Cynthia A. Gilbert v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

disability definition

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability benefits

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ's residual-functional-capacity determination was supported by substantial evidence.
2. Whether the ALJ was required to include additional limitations for impairments found severe, including major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder.
3. Whether the ALJ failed to account for alleged insomnia, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, fatigue, back pain, hip pain, right knee pain, congestive heart failure, and COPD during the relevant period.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ's residual-functional-capacity determination was supported by substantial evidence and was reached through a correct application of the governing law.
2. The ALJ was not required to include the claimant's preferred limitations concerning being off task, unscheduled breaks, or absenteeism because the record supported the restrictions imposed in the RFC.
3. The ALJ did not err by declining to include additional exertional limitations for COPD, congestive heart failure, back pain, hip pain, knee pain, insomnia, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, or fatigue because the claimant identified no functional limitations attributable to those conditions during the relevant period.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Substantial evidence does not mean a large or considerable amount of evidence, but rather “such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion.”” (Legal Standard)

“To reverse the ALJ’s findings and decision, the Court “must find that the evidence not only supports [a contrary] conclusion but compels it.”” (Legal Standard)

“Accordingly, the Commissioner’s decision will be AFFIRMED.” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Gilbert alleged disability beginning November 1, 2012, with a date last insured of December 31, 2017. The ALJ found major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder to be severe impairments, but found that her mental-health conditions improved with medication and assessed a residual functional capacity for work at all

exertional levels with restrictions to simple, routine tasks, limited workplace changes, no production-pace work, and occasional social interaction. Gilbert relied in substantial part on medical evidence and alleged conditions arising after the relevant insured period, including COPD, heart failure, hip pain, knee pain, and back pain.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Gilbert protectively applied for disability benefits alleging disability beginning November 1, 2012. The application was denied initially and on reconsideration; following an administrative hearing, an ALJ found that she was not disabled, and the Appeals Council denied review. Gilbert then sought judicial review in the Middle District of Pennsylvania, which affirmed the Commissioner's decision.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Williams v. Sullivan, 970 F.2d 1178, 1181-82 (3d Cir. 1992)
- Bowen v. Yuckert, 482 U.S. 137, 146 n.5 (1987)
- Johnson v. Comm'r of Soc. Sec., 529 F.3d 198, 200 (3d Cir. 2008)
- Ficca v. Astrue, 901 F. Supp. 2d 533, 536 (M.D. Pa. 2012)
- Biestek v. Berryhill, 587 U.S. 97, 102-03 (2019)
- Pierce v. Underwood, 487 U.S. 552, 565 (1988)
- Richardson v. Perales, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971)
- Mason v. Shalala, 994 F.2d 1058, 1064 (3d Cir. 1993)
- Consolo v. Fed. Mar. Comm'n, 383 U.S. 607, 620 (1966)
- Leslie v. Barnhart, 304 F. Supp. 2d 623, 627 (M.D. Pa. 2003)
- Immigr. & Naturalization Serv. v. Elias-Zacarias, 502 U.S. 478, 481 n.1 (1992)
- Arnold v. Colvin, No. 12-2417, 2014 WL 940205, at *1 (M.D. Pa. Mar. 11, 2014)
- Burton v. Schweiker, 512 F. Supp. 913, 914 (W.D. Pa. 1981)
- Wright v. Sullivan, 900 F.2d 675, 678 (3d Cir. 1990)
- Burnett v. Comm'r of Soc. Sec., 220 F.3d 112, 119 (3d Cir. 2000)
- Cotter v. Harris, 650 F.2d 481, 482 (3d Cir. 1981)
- Atkins v. Comm'r of Soc. Sec., 810 F. App'x 122, 129 (3d Cir. 2020)