

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

Matthew C. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

Matthew C. · No. 3:25-CV-00010 (VAB) · Decided March 7, 2026

SUMMARY

The document is a ruling and order from the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut addressing a Social Security claimant’s appeal under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g). The court considers whether the Administrative Law Judge adequately developed the record and properly evaluated medical-source opinions. The court denies the claimant’s motion to reverse and grants the Commissioner’s motion to affirm.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Connecticut
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Victor A. Bolden
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Connecticut
DECIDED	March 7, 2026
DOCKET	3:25-CV-00010 (VAB)
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner's final decision denying the plaintiff's applications for disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The district court reviews the Commissioner's decision as an appellate function and determines whether the correct legal principles were applied and whether the conclusions are supported by substantial evidence in the record as a whole. The court may not make a de novo disability determination. Substantial evidence is more than a mere scintilla and means such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court opinion; persuasive authority only
PARTIES	Matthew C. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

- judicial review of agency action
- administrative law
- disability definition

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

federal judicial review

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ adequately developed the administrative record.
2. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated the medical source opinions, including the treating psychiatrist's more restrictive opinion and the state agency consultants' opinions.
3. Whether the plaintiff was entitled to reversal and remand for calculation of benefits or further proceedings.
4. Whether the plaintiff was entitled to attorney's fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ adequately developed the record because it contained extensive treatment records and medical source opinions covering the relevant period, with no obvious gaps requiring additional evidence.
2. The ALJ properly evaluated the medical opinions by considering their supportability and consistency, reasonably discounting Dr. Owen's October 2023 restrictive opinion and relying in part on the state agency consultants' opinions.
3. Reversal for calculation of benefits was not warranted because the record did not contain persuasive proof of disability making further proceedings pointless, and substantial evidence supported the Commissioner's decision.
4. The plaintiff was not entitled to attorney's fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act because he was not a prevailing party.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Substantial evidence is ‘more than a mere scintilla.’” (II)

“It means such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion.” (II)

“Even if there was evidence in the record to show that Matthew C.’s conditions were worsening considerably towards the end of 2023, the record does not show that Matthew C. was experiencing such symptoms with the consistency and longevity necessary to establish disability.” (III.B.ii)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Matthew C. alleged disability based primarily on generalized anxiety disorder, autism spectrum disorder, depressive disorder, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and alcohol use disorder in remission. His treatment records reflected fluctuating anxiety and depression, occasional panic attacks, situational stressors, marijuana use, and periods of functional improvement, including attending classes, shopping, pursuing employment, working part-time in food delivery, and reporting stabilized anxiety. His treating psychiatrist, Dr. Kim Owen, supplied increasingly restrictive opinions, including an October 2023

opinion that he would be off-task for more than thirty percent of the workday and unable to sustain full-time work. The ALJ found severe anxiety disorder and autism spectrum disorder but determined that the plaintiff retained the residual functional capacity for simple, routine, repetitive work with limited social interaction and other non-exertional restrictions.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The plaintiff applied for Title II disability insurance benefits and Title XVI supplemental security income benefits, alleging disability beginning January 1, 2017. An administrative law judge denied the claims, the Appeals Council denied review, and the ALJ's decision became the Commissioner's final decision. The plaintiff moved to reverse and remand, while the Commissioner moved for an order affirming the decision. The district court denied the plaintiff's motion, granted the Commissioner's motion, denied the request for Equal Access to Justice Act fees, entered judgment for the Commissioner, and closed the case.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Zambrana v. Califano, 651 F.2d 842, 844 (2d Cir. 1981)
- Schaal v. Apfel, 134 F.3d 496, 501 (2d Cir. 1998)
- Beauvoir v. Chater, 104 F.3d 1432, 1433 (2d Cir. 1997)
- Wagner v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 906 F.2d 856, 860 (2d Cir. 1990)
- Johnson v. Bowen, 817 F.2d 983, 985 (2d Cir. 1987)
- Brault v. Social Security Administration, Commissioner, 683 F.3d 443, 447–48 (2d Cir. 2012) (per curiam)
- Moran v. Astrue, 569 F.3d 108, 112 (2d Cir. 2009)
- Dickinson v. Zurko, 527 U.S. 150, 153 (1999)
- Talavera v. Astrue, 697 F.3d 145, 151 (2d Cir. 2012)
- Mongeur v. Heckler, 722 F.2d 1033, 1038 (2d Cir. 1983) (per curiam)
- Shalala v. Schaefer, 509 U.S. 292, 297 (1993)
- Melkonyan v. Sullivan, 501 U.S. 89, 98 (1991)
- Rosa v. Callahan, 168 F.3d 72, 79 n.5, 82–83 (2d Cir. 1999)
- Williams v. Apfel, 204 F.3d 48, 50 (2d Cir. 1999)
- Carroll v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 705 F.2d 638, 642 (2d Cir. 1983)
- Pollard v. Halter, 377 F.3d 183, 189 (2d Cir. 2004)
- Kohler v. Astrue, 546 F.3d 260, 265 (2d Cir. 2008)
- Zabala v. Astrue, 595 F.3d 402, 409 (2d Cir. 2010)
- Parker v. Harris, 626 F.2d 225, 235 (2d Cir. 1980)
- Lamay v. Commissioner of Social Security, 562 F.3d 503, 508–09 (2d Cir. 2009)
- Tejada v. Apfel, 167 F.3d 770, 774 (2d Cir. 1999)

- *Moreau v. Berryhill*, No. 3:17-CV-396 (JCH), 2018 WL 1316197, at *4 (D. Conn. Mar. 14, 2018)
- *Downes v. Colvin*, No. 14-CV-7147 (JLC), 2015 WL 4481088, at *12 (S.D.N.Y. July 22, 2015)
- *Lacava v. Astrue*, 2012 WL 6621731, at *11 (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 27, 2012)
- *Gabrielsen v. Colvin*, 2015 WL 4597548, at *4 (S.D.N.Y. July 30, 2015)
- *Gary L. v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 21-CV-01268-HKS, 2023 WL 8891437, at *4 (W.D.N.Y. Dec. 26, 2023)
- *Rucker v. Kijakazi*, 48 F.4th 86, 98 n.3 (2d Cir. 2022)
- *Novaro v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 511 F. Supp. 3d 243, 246 (E.D.N.Y. 2020)
- *Tyson v. Astrue*, 2010 WL 4365577, at *10 (D. Conn. June 15, 2010), report and recommendation adopted, 2010 WL 4340672 (D. Conn. Oct. 22, 2010)
- *Kya M. v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 506 F. Supp. 3d 159, 164–65 (W.D.N.Y. 2020)
- *Guerra v. Commissioner of Social Security*, No. 1:16-CV-00991 (MAT), 2018 WL 3751292, at *7 (W.D.N.Y. Aug. 7, 2018), *aff'd*, 778 F. App'x 75 (2d Cir. 2019)
- *Shalala v. Schaefer*, 509 U.S. 292, 310 (1993) (Stevens, J., concurring)
- *Barnhart v. Walton*, 535 U.S. 212, 217 (2002)
- *Kerin v. U.S. Postal Service*, 218 F.3d 185, 189 (2d Cir. 2000)
- *Commissioner, INS v. Jean*, 496 U.S. 154, 158 (1990)
- *Melkonyan v. Sullivan*, 501 U.S. 89, 92 (1991)