

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Cathleen M. v. Commissioner of Social Security

Cathleen M. · No. 24-CV-01161-HKS · Decided May 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of New York upheld the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of disability benefits to the plaintiff. The court rejected challenges concerning the plaintiff’s ability to perform past relevant work, consideration of a closed period of disability, and evaluation of her impairments. Plaintiff’s motion for judgment on the pleadings was denied, and the Commissioner’s motion was granted.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of New York
WRITING FOR THE COURT	H. Kenneth Schroeder, Jr.
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of New York
DECIDED	May 6, 2026
DOCKET	24-CV-01161-HKS
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner's denial of Social Security disability benefits.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed whether the Commissioner's conclusions were supported by substantial evidence and based on the correct legal standard. If the evidence was susceptible to more than one rational interpretation, the Commissioner's determination had to be upheld.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown
PARTIES	Cathleen M. v. Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

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

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether substantial evidence supported the ALJ's finding that the plaintiff could perform her past relevant work as an accounting clerk.
2. Whether the ALJ erred by failing to consider or award a closed period of disability from July 23, 2021, through September 22, 2022.
3. Whether the ALJ failed to consider the plaintiff's left-hip impairment and the cumulative effect of her impairments.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ properly found that the plaintiff could perform her past relevant work as an accounting clerk as that work is generally performed in the national economy.
2. The plaintiff was not entitled to remand or benefits for a closed period because she did not request such relief during the administrative proceedings, her attorney rejected the proposed closed period when the ALJ raised it, and the evidence did not establish disability through September 22, 2022.
3. The ALJ adequately considered the plaintiff's left-hip symptoms as part of her back-related impairment and did not fail to consider the cumulative impact of the plaintiff's impairments.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“In reviewing a final decision of the SSA, this Court is limited to determining whether the SSA’s conclusions were supported by substantial evidence in the record and were based on a correct legal standard.” (Legal Standards)

“Where an administrative decision rests on adequate findings sustained by evidence having rational probative force, the court should not substitute its judgment for that of the Commissioner.” (Legal Standards)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The plaintiff was involved in a July 23, 2021 motor-vehicle accident that worsened preexisting lower-back pain. She underwent a June 14, 2022 discectomy, fusion, and instrumentation, and records through September 22, 2022 documented improvement, satisfactory hardware positioning, and a satisfactory fusion. At the administrative hearing, she testified to continuing pain, limited sitting and standing, and anticipated absences, but she had received no treatment after September 2022 other than annual physicals. A vocational expert testified that, given the RFC adopted by the ALJ, the plaintiff could perform her past work as an accounting clerk as generally performed in the national economy.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Cathleen M. filed a Title II disability claim alleging disability beginning July 23, 2021. The claim was denied initially and on reconsideration, and an ALJ held a telephonic hearing on January 22, 2024. The ALJ issued an unfavorable decision on June 4, 2024, and the Appeals Council denied review on September 23, 2024. The

district court denied the plaintiff's motion for judgment on the pleadings, granted the Commissioner's motion, upheld the administrative decision, and directed the Clerk to close the case.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Talavera v. Astrue, 697 F.3d 145, 151 (2d Cir. 2012)
- Moran v. Astrue, 569 F.3d 496, 501 (2d Cir. 2009)
- McIntyre v. Colvin, 758 F.3d 146, 149 (2d Cir. 2014)
- Yancey v. Apfel, 145 F.3d 106, 111 (2d Cir. 1998)
- Jacqueline L. v. Commissioner of Social Security, 515 F. Supp. 3d 2, 7 (W.D.N.Y. 2021)
- Rosario v. Commissioner of Social Security, 20 Civ. 7749, 2022 WL 819810, at *8 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 18, 2022)
- Shawn H. v. Commissioner of Social Security, Civil Action No. 2:19-cv-113, 2020 WL 3969879, at *6 (D. Vt. July 14, 2020)
- Jasinski v. Barnhart, 341 F.3d 182, 185 (2d Cir. 2003)
- Filer v. Commissioner of Social Security, 435 F. Supp. 3d 517, 522 (W.D.N.Y. 2020)
- Rosario v. Bisignano, 3:24-CV-1445 (VDO), 2025 WL 2300764, at *9 (D. Conn. Aug. 9, 2025)
- Miriam R. v. Commissioner of Social Security, Case No. 1:21-cv-01242-TPK, 2023 WL 3491735, at *4 (W.D.N.Y. May 17, 2023)
- Cheryl L. D. v. Commissioner of Social Security, Civ. No. 3:21CV00704(SALM), 2022 WL 2980821, at *15 (D. Conn. July 28, 2022)
- Corinna B. v. Commissioner of Social Security, 6:23-CV-516 (MJK), 2024 WL 621285, at *7 n.3, *9 (N.D.N.Y. Feb. 14, 2024)
- Brenda C. v. Kijakazi, No. 3:21-cv-01650 (MPS), 2023 WL 2743290, at *6 (D. Conn. Mar. 31, 2023)
- Charles W. v. Kijakazi, 1:20-CV-01298-MJR, 2022 WL 2207182, at *8 (W.D.N.Y. June 21, 2022)
- Noelle v. Commissioner of Social Security, 5:15-CV-1301 (GTS/WBC), 2017 WL 9509957, at *7 (N.D.N.Y. Feb. 13, 2017), report and recommendation adopted, 2017 WL 945094 (Mar. 10, 2017)
- Kristen F. v. Commissioner of Social Security, 3:20-CV-464 (ATB), 2021 WL 1668933, at *8 n.11 (N.D.N.Y. Apr. 27, 2021)
- Melinda J. C. v. Commissioner of Social Security, CASE # 19-cv-01618, 2021 WL 766860, at *6 (W.D.N.Y. Feb. 26, 2021)
- Amber G. v. Commissioner of Social Security, CASE NO. 6:24-cv-06634, at *8 (W.D.N.Y. Mar. 30, 2026)