

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
GEORGIA

Rhonda Maxwell v. Walden University; and Brightside Child and
Family Advocacy

Maxwell · No. 4:25-cv-323 · Decided January 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The court denies Rhonda Maxwell’s request for an ex parte temporary restraining order, finding that her filings do not establish immediate and irreparable harm under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b). The court grants her request for an expedited hearing on a preliminary injunction, withholds ruling on that request, and orders service of the case materials and responses within specified deadlines.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Georgia
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Georgia
DECIDED	January 6, 2026
DOCKET	4:25-cv-323
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved for a temporary restraining order, preliminary injunction, and expedited hearing in an action alleging violations of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A temporary restraining order without notice requires specific facts in an affidavit or verified complaint clearly showing that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will occur before the adverse party can be heard, together with written certification of notice efforts and reasons notice should not be required.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court order with no reporter citation
PARTIES	Rhonda Maxwell v. Walden University, Brightside Child and Family Advocacy

TOPICS

- injunctions
- civil procedure
- reasonable accommodation
- ada / disability

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

disability discrimination

injunctive relief

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff satisfied Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b)(1) for an ex parte temporary restraining order.
2. Whether Plaintiff's requested emergency relief would preserve the status quo or instead alter the existing circumstances without notice to Defendants.
3. Whether the court should expedite a hearing on Plaintiff's preliminary-injunction motion while withholding a ruling on the merits pending Defendants' responses.

HOLDINGS

1. Plaintiff failed to show that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage would result before Defendants could be heard and failed to establish a sufficient basis for dispensing with notice; therefore, the request for a temporary restraining order was denied.
2. The court granted Plaintiff's request for an expedited preliminary-injunction hearing and withheld ruling on the preliminary-injunction request until Defendants were served and had an opportunity to respond.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“such ex parte temporary restraining orders “should be restricted to serving their underlying purpose of preserving the status quo and preventing irreparable harm just so long as is necessary to hold a hearing, and no longer.””

“The “status quo” is her exclusion from the field placement at Brightside along with Walden’s non-provision of special accommodations.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, who is legally blind and proceeding pro se, was enrolled in Walden University's Master of Social Work program and participated in a required field placement with Brightside. She alleged that Walden failed to consistently implement approved accommodations and that Brightside did not respond to her accommodation request before terminating her field placement. She sought reinstatement and other directives, asserting that exclusion from the placement would cause her to lose academic credit, required field hours, and timely degree completion.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed the action and an initial motion for emergency relief on December 30, 2025, then filed amended versions of the Complaint and motion. The court denied the request for an ex parte temporary restraining order, granted an expedited hearing on the preliminary-injunction request, and withheld ruling on that request pending service and Defendants' responses.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Granny Goose Foods, Inc. v. Brotherhood of Teamsters & Auto Truck Drivers Local No. 70*, 415 U.S. 423, 438-39 (1974)

OPINION

Maxwell

PER CURIAM.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
SAVANNAH DIVISION

RHONDA MAXWELL,

Plaintiff, CIVIL ACTION NO.: 4:25-cv-323 v.

WALDEN UNIVERSITY; and BRIGHTSIDE
CHILD AND FAMILY ADVOCACY,

Defendants.

ORDER

On December 30, 2025, Plaintiff Rhonda Maxwell, who is proceeding pro se, filed a Complaint initiating this case, (doc. 1), along with a Motion for Temporary Restraining Order, Preliminary Injunction, and Expedited Hearing, (doc. 3). The following day, she filed amended versions of those filings. (See docs. 6 & 8.) Put briefly, Plaintiff alleges that she is legally blind and is enrolled in the Masters of Social Work program offered by Defendant Walden University (“Walden”). (Doc. 6, pp. 1–2.) She claims Walden is aware of her disability and has approved certain accommodations related to her visual impairment (“including structured communication, consistent supervision, accessible task completion methods, and oversight”). (Id. at p. 2.) Walden, however, has allegedly failed to consistently implement the approved accommodations. (Id.) Plaintiff also alleges that, as part of her required coursework, she was participating in a “field placement” with Defendant Brightside Child and Family Advocacy (“Brightside”). (Id. at p. 2; doc. 8, p. 2.) While not explicitly alleged in her Amended Complaint, Plaintiff claims, in her Amended Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction, that she requested accommodations from Brightside but never received any response and was terminated shortly thereafter. (Doc. 8, p. 2.) According to her Amended Complaint, “Plaintiff remains excluded from her field placement while the academic quarter[, which ends on February 9, 2026], continues to run.” (Doc. 6, p. 2 (“Each passing week causes Plaintiff to permanently lose academic credit, required field hours, and timely degree completion.”).) She asserts claims for violation of the Rehabilitation Act and the American with Disabilities Act and she seeks, inter alia, a Court order directing the Defendants to “reinstate” her with reasonable accommodations. (Id. at pp. 3–4.) In

her Amended Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction, Plaintiff has requested both a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction via an expedited preliminary injunction hearing. (Doc. 8.) She claims “[i]mmediate relief is necessary to preserve the status quo and prevent irreparable harm.” (Id. at p. 1.) She lists a bevy of specific directives she seeks to have the Court issue to Defendants (in addition to ordering that she be reinstated to the field placement). (Id. at pp. 3–4.) Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b) permits a Court to issue a temporary restraining order without written or oral notice to the adverse party or its attorney only if: “(A) specific facts in an affidavit or a verified complaint clearly show that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result to the movant before the adverse party can be heard in opposition; and (B) the movant’s attorney certifies in writing any efforts made to give notice and the reasons why it should not be required.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 65(b)(1)(A–B). The Supreme Court of the United States has advised that such ex parte temporary restraining orders “should be restricted to serving their underlying purpose of preserving the status quo and preventing irreparable harm just so long as is necessary to hold a hearing, and no longer.” *Granny Goose Foods, Inc. v. Bhd. of Teamsters & Auto Truck Drivers Local No. 70*, 415 U.S. 423, 439 (1974). Along with her Motion, Plaintiff included an unsigned document entitled “Rule 65(b) Certification Regarding Notice,”¹ in which she states that “[i]mmediate and irreparable injury will occur before Defendants can be heard in opposition because Plaintiff remains excluded from her required academic program and field placement while the current academic quarter is already in progress.” (Doc. 8, p. 6.) She also states that “[p]roviding advance notice to Defendants would risk further delay, obstruction, or retaliation, and would render the requested emergency relief ineffective, as the loss of the current academic term would become unavoidable before the Court could act.” (Id.) Even assuming this document qualifies as an “affidavit” under subsection (A) of Rule 65(b)(1), or as a written certification under subsection (B), the facts asserted therein do not show that “immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result to the movant before the adverse party can be heard in opposition” nor do they provide any other reasons why notice should not be required. Plaintiff’s assertion that a TRO giving her the relief she requests is necessary to “preserve the status quo” is misguided. The “status quo” is her exclusion from the field placement at Brightside along with Walden’s non-provision of special accommodations. Notably, according to Plaintiff’s own allegations, she was terminated “shortly” after her “mid-October 2025” request for accommodations from Brightside, strongly hinting that the current situation has been the “status quo” for upwards of two months. (Doc. 8, p. 2.) ¹ Plaintiff also did not include a signature (and merely typed her name) on her Amended Complaint or her Amended Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction. (See docs. 6 & 8.) Moreover, Plaintiff’s Motion asks the Court to impose a bevy of specific requirements and restrictions on Defendants— many of which lack any factual support in Plaintiff’s filings—rather than simply asking the Court to order that Defendants abstain from some action. (See id. at pp. 3– 4 (for example, Plaintiff asks the Court to order that, “[d]ue to past discrimination, [three specified individuals] shall have no role in

Plaintiff’s accommodations, evaluations, or related meetings” and to order that “all emails [of specified types] sent to youth . . . can be sent [by Plaintiff] from home after hours . . .”).) The Court is not willing to swiftly issue such sweeping directives without hearing from Defendants. See *Granny Goose Foods*, 415 U.S. at 438–39 (“The stringent restrictions imposed by . . . Rule 65 on the availability of *ex parte* temporary restraining orders reflect the fact that our entire jurisprudence runs counter to the notion of court action taken before reasonable notice and an opportunity to be heard has been granted both sides of a dispute.”). Accordingly, Plaintiff’s filings—including her Complaint (which the Court assumes, *arguendo*, qualifies as verified despite not having been signed)—fail to demonstrate that, unless the Court acts *instanter* and without waiting to hear from Defendants, Plaintiff is at risk of an immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage. In light of the foregoing, the Court DENIES in part, GRANTS in part, and WITHHOLDS RULING in part on Plaintiff’s Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction. (Doc. 8.) Specifically, the Court DENIES Plaintiff’s request for a temporary restraining order; GRANTS Plaintiff’s request for an expedited hearing on her request for a preliminary injunction; and, accordingly, WITHHOLDS RULING on the request for a preliminary injunction. Given her request for an expedited hearing, the Court ORDERS Plaintiff to serve Defendants with the summons, Complaint, all pending motions, and a copy of this Order no later than January 19, 2026.* Each Defendant’s response to the Motion, (doc. 8), must be filed on the Court’s docket and served on Plaintiff within TEN (10) DAYS of the date that Defendant is served. The Court will schedule a hearing on the Motion once it receives the Defendants’ responses. SO ORDERED, this 6th day of January, 2026.

R. STAN BAKER, CHIEF JUDGE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

° Given the expedited deadlines contained in this Order, the Court DIRECTS the Clerk of Court to serve this Order to Plaintiff via electronic mail and regular mail. The Court only makes this provision for this Order, and Plaintiff should not expect to receive future filings via electronic mail.