

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
NEW YORK

Shana H. v. Commissioner of Social Security

Shana H. · No. 1:24-CV-1159 (DJS) · Decided March 3, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of New York reviewed the Commissioner's denial of Shana H.'s application for Social Security disability insurance benefits. The court held that the administrative law judge's findings, including the residual functional capacity assessment, evaluation of medical opinions, and step-five vocational determination, were supported by substantial evidence. Plaintiff's motion for judgment on the pleadings was denied, Defendant's motion was granted, and the Commissioner's decision was affirmed.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of New York
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Daniel J. Stewart
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of New York
DECIDED	March 3, 2026
DOCKET	1:24-CV-1159 (DJS)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Action under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) seeking review of the Commissioner's denial of disability insurance benefits. The parties filed cross-motions for judgment on the pleadings.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews whether the Commissioner applied the correct legal standards and whether the decision is supported by substantial evidence; it may not determine disability de novo. The court considers the whole record, including evidence detracting from the Commissioner's decision, but must sustain the decision if supported by substantial evidence even where substantial evidence could support a contrary result.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Shana H. v. Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

disability definition

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ erred at step two by failing to find Plaintiff's reported memory issues to be a severe impairment or apply the special technique for evaluating mental impairments.
2. Whether the ALJ's residual functional capacity assessment was unsupported because it did not include specific manipulative limitations for diabetic neuropathy and carpal tunnel syndrome.
3. Whether the ALJ improperly evaluated the consistency of treating provider Dr. Shannon Comley's medical opinion.
4. Whether an incomplete or typographical sentence in the ALJ's discussion of the state agency consultants required remand.
5. Whether the ALJ erred at step five by relying on vocational-expert testimony and finding that Plaintiff could perform cashier work existing in significant numbers in the national economy.
6. Whether any alleged step-four error warranted remand despite the supported step-five finding.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ did not err by declining to apply the special technique for mental impairments because Plaintiff did not establish a medically determinable impairment causing the reported memory issues.
2. The ALJ's failure to include specific manipulative limitations did not warrant remand because Plaintiff did not identify medical evidence or a proposed functional limitation establishing that more restrictive limitations were required.
3. The ALJ adequately evaluated the consistency of Dr. Comley's opinion with the other evidence and sufficiently explained why the opinion was not persuasive.
4. The ALJ's step-five determination was supported by substantial evidence because the vocational expert testified that a person with Plaintiff's RFC could perform cashier work, and more than 465,000 such positions existed nationally.
5. Any alleged step-four error was harmless because the ALJ's step-five finding was supported by substantial evidence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Rather, the Commissioner's determination will be reversed only if the correct legal standards were not applied, or it was not supported by substantial evidence." (at 3)

"Because the ALJ's finding that Plaintiff could perform at least the cashier position was supported by substantial evidence, the Court, finds that the ALJ's Step Five determination is supported by substantial evidence." (at 15)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, born in 1984, had worked as a billing clerk and restaurant server and alleged disability based on diabetes, neuropathy, pregnancy, carpal tunnel syndrome, sleep apnea, memory issues, and thyroid disease. The ALJ found severe impairments including diabetes mellitus, diabetic neuropathy, a history of carpal tunnel syndrome, and a lumbar compression deformity, but found that Plaintiff retained the capacity for light work with additional postural and hazard limitations. Plaintiff reported daily activities including texting, emailing, and data entry work, and a vocational expert identified cashier work and other jobs available in significant numbers.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff's application for disability insurance benefits was denied initially and on reconsideration. After a hearing, the ALJ found Plaintiff not disabled on January 16, 2024. The Appeals Council denied review on August 1, 2024, making the ALJ's decision the Commissioner's final decision. The district court denied Plaintiff's motion for judgment on the pleadings, granted Defendant's motion, affirmed the denial of benefits, and dismissed the complaint.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- *Wagner v. Secretary of Health & Human Services*, 906 F.2d 856, 860 (2d Cir. 1990)
- *Johnson v. Bowen*, 817 F.2d 983, 986 (2d Cir. 1987)
- *Richardson v. Perales*, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971)
- *Williams v. Bowen*, 859 F.2d 255, 258 (2d Cir. 1988)
- *Rosado v. Sullivan*, 805 F. Supp. 147, 153 (S.D.N.Y. 1992)
- *Bowen v. Yuckert*, 482 U.S. 137, 141-42 (1987)
- *Barnhart v. Thompson*, 540 U.S. 20, 24 (2003)
- *Armstrong v. Berryhill*, 2018 WL 1357378, at *2 (N.D.N.Y. Mar. 14, 2018)
- *Donahue v. Colvin*, 2018 WL 2354986, at *5 (W.D.N.Y. May 24, 2018)
- *Lugo Rodriguez v. Berryhill*, 2018 WL 1135330, at *4 (D. Conn. Mar. 2, 2018)
- *Rousey v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 285 F. Supp. 3d 723, 738 (S.D.N.Y. 2018)
- *Pamela H. v. Kijakazi*, 2021 WL 4307457, at *2 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 22, 2021)
- *Pardee v. Astrue*, 631 F. Supp. 2d 200, 210 (N.D.N.Y. 2009)
- *Christopher G. v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 2024 WL 4136562, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. Aug. 20, 2024)
- *Beaman v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 2020 WL 473618, at *6 (W.D.N.Y. Jan. 28, 2020)
- *Jeremy G. v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 2025 WL 1507232, at *7 (N.D.N.Y. May 5, 2025)
- *White v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 2022 WL 951049, at *5 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 30, 2022)
- *Acosta Cuevas v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 2021 WL 363682, at *14 (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 29, 2021)
- *Cuevas v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 2022 WL 717612 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 10, 2022)

- Tara B. v. Commissioner of Social Security, 2023 WL 7281138, at *1 (N.D.N.Y. Nov. 3, 2023)
- Boyer v. Berryhill, 2017 WL 1207833, at *5 (N.D.N.Y. Mar. 31, 2017)
- Bavaro v. Astrue, 413 F. App'x 382, 384 (2d Cir. 2011)
- Barnaby v. Berryhill, 773 F. App'x 642, 644 (2d Cir. 2019)
- Stonick v. Saul, 2020 WL 6129339, at *19 (D. Conn. Oct. 19, 2020)
- Carlos R. C. G. v. Berryhill, 2018 WL 4554495, at *8 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 21, 2018)
- Wayne E. v. Commissioner of Social Security, 2025 WL 662514, at *6 (N.D.N.Y. Feb. 28, 2025)
- McCusker v. Commissioner of Social Security, 2014 WL 6610025, at *2 (N.D.N.Y. Nov. 20, 2014)
- Saha M. v. Commissioner of Social Security, 2022 WL 22210126, at *6 (N.D.N.Y. June 10, 2022)
- Marrero v. Commissioner of Social Security, 2019 WL 5208121, at *2 (W.D.N.Y. Oct. 16, 2019)
- Sisson v. Colvin, 2015 WL 4878108, at *10 (N.D.N.Y. Aug. 12, 2015)
- Miller v. Colvin, 2013 WL 1760856, at *5 (N.D.N.Y. Apr. 24, 2013)