NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION
To be cited only in accordance with FED. R. APP. P. 32.1

United States Court of Appeals

For the Seventh Circuit
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Submitted June 16, 2026*
Decided June 16, 2026

Before

FRANK H. EASTERBROOK, *Circuit Judge*

JOHN Z. LEE, *Circuit Judge*

REBECCA TAIBLESON, *Circuit Judge*

No. 24-2206

JILL M. STANISZEWSKI,
Plaintiff-Appellant,

v.

FRANK BISIGNANO, Commissioner of Social Security,
Defendant-Appellee.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division.

No. 21 CV 2485

Young B. Kim,
Magistrate Judge.

O R D E R

Jill Staniszewski, who experiences impaired memory and concentration, appeals the denial of her application for disability insurance benefits. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 405(g). An administrative law judge (ALJ) found that Staniszewski was not disabled within the

* We have agreed to decide the case without oral argument because the briefs and record adequately present the facts and legal arguments, and oral argument would not significantly aid the court. FED. R. APP. P. 34(a)(2)(C).

meaning of the Social Security Act and denied her application. The district court upheld the ALJ's ruling. Because substantial evidence supports the ALJ's decision, we affirm.

Staniszewski began experiencing bipolar disorder at some point before December 2014, at which time her symptoms escalated to a mixed state of mania and depression. Also around this time, she experienced deficits in her attention, concentration, and ability to complete tasks. In August 2015, she applied for disability insurance benefits, alleging that she became disabled in April 2015.

That December, as part of the application process, she underwent an examination by Dr. Anna Wegierek, a state medical examiner, who assessed that Staniszewski's "cognitive faculties are grossly intact" and that her "capacity for understanding and memory, and her ability to socially interact and adapt are intact." Dr. Wegierek noted, however, that Staniszewski's "immediate memory was impaired, as she made mistakes" on a test requiring her to recall sequences of numbers.

Staniszewski's treating psychiatrist, Dr. Mary Walsh, whom she had been seeing since 2006, reached a different conclusion. In January 2017, Dr. Walsh provided a medical source statement, opining that Staniszewski had marked limitations in her understanding and memory as well as her sustained concentration and persistence. The record contains Dr. Walsh's notes from 18 appointments between January 2015 and December 2018.[1] During five visits between January 7 and October 20, 2017, Dr. Walsh noted that Staniszewski had impairments in her memory or concentration, though Dr. Walsh also commented in the January notes that these impairments were self-reported.

After concluding her treating relationship with Dr. Walsh, Staniszewski began receiving treatment from Laura Logan, an advanced practice nurse. Staniszewski saw Logan between April and December 2019. During the first visit, Logan observed that Staniszewski was cooperative, had normal speech, logical and coherent thought processes, and normal thought content. Logan noted Staniszewski's report of distractibility and short-term memory loss, but she also administered the Montreal Cognitive Test, which tasked Staniszewski with, among other things, remembering five words and reporting them later. Staniszewski remembered four of those five words.

[1] Dr. Walsh noted in her submission of the records that there were additional visits in 2018 and 2019, but she could not locate her notes for those visits.

In February 2021, an ALJ presided over a hearing to determine Staniszewski's eligibility for benefits.[2] At that hearing, the ALJ heard testimony from Dr. Michael Carney, a psychologist and medical expert. Dr. Carney testified that he reviewed Staniszewski's medical records and assessed that Staniszewski had a moderate ability to concentrate, persist, and maintain pace, and likewise her ability to understand, remember, or apply information was moderate. In assessing Staniszewski's memory, Dr. Carney considered notes from Dr. Wegierek, Dr. Walsh, and Logan. He commented that Staniszewski's symptoms related to memory and concentration impairments were mostly self-reported, and that her performance in memory tests administered by Dr. Wegierek and Logan was "a little below average" and "pretty good" respectively.

A month later, the ALJ denied Staniszewski's application, applying the five-step disability analysis. *See* 20 C.F.R. § 416.920(a)(4). At step one, the ALJ found that Staniszewski had not engaged in substantial gainful activity since April 2015. At step two, the ALJ found that Staniszewski's bipolar disorder constituted a severe impairment. But at step three, the ALJ reasoned that her bipolar disorder did not meet a listed impairment. At step four, the ALJ determined that Staniszewski had "the residual functional capacity to perform a full range of work at all exertional levels but with" certain nonexertional limitations. And at step five, the ALJ determined that Staniszewski could successfully adjust to other work.

In reaching her conclusion at step four, the ALJ considered Dr. Walsh's opinion but did not give it controlling weight because it was inconsistent with other evidence in the record. To assess what weight to give that opinion, the ALJ considered the factors set forth in 20 C.F.R. § 404.1527(c), noting, among other things, that Dr. Walsh had a long treating relationship with Staniszewski, though there were "significant breaks in that treatment," *see* 20 C.F.R. § 404.1527(c)(2)(i); that the problems with attention and concentration were based on subjective reporting, making the opinion less supportable, *see id.* § 404.1527(c)(3); and that the opinion was not consistent with the entire record, *see id.* § 404.1527(c)(4). Based on this assessment, the ALJ concluded that Dr. Walsh's opinion should be afforded little weight. The ALJ instead gave great weight to Dr. Carney's opinion because he was the only source who had reviewed the entire

[2] In January 2018, a different ALJ had denied Staniszewski's application for benefits. On review, the district court remanded, concluding, among other things, that the ALJ improperly weighed Dr. Walsh's opinion because it appeared consistent with the medical notes in the record.

medical record—including the objective tests provided by Dr. Wegierek and Logan—and because Dr. Carney provided a reasoned basis for his findings.

Staniszewski sought federal judicial review with the aid of counsel, arguing that the ALJ's reasons for discounting Dr. Walsh's opinion were flawed. The district court upheld the ALJ's determination, concluding that the ALJ's decision was supported by substantial evidence. Specifically, the court noted that Dr. Walsh's opinion was based primarily on Staniszewski's subjective reporting rather than objective testing.

Staniszewski, now proceeding pro se, appeals. We will affirm an ALJ's decision denying disability benefits if it is supported by substantial evidence—i.e., evidence that "a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support [the] conclusion"—and we will reverse only if the record "compels a contrary result." *Gedatus v. Saul*, 994 F.3d 893, 900 (7th Cir. 2021) (first quoting *Richardson v. Perales*, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971); and then quoting *Borovsky v. Holder*, 612 F.3d 917, 921 (7th Cir. 2010)). If substantial evidence supports the ALJ's conclusion, "[w]e will not reweigh the evidence" or "resolve debatable evidentiary conflicts." *Id.*

Staniszewski first argues that the ALJ should have given Dr. Walsh's opinion controlling weight. Staniszewski contends that it was improper to discount Dr. Walsh's opinion because it was based on Staniszewski's self-reported symptoms. As Staniszewski sees it, such psychiatric opinions are necessarily grounded in a patient's self-reported symptoms. But the ALJ's reason for discounting Dr. Walsh's opinion was not merely that it was based on subjective reporting. The ALJ also considered that the opinion was inconsistent with the objective evidence of Staniszewski's memory, specifically the tests administered by Dr. Wegierek and Logan. This inconsistency is sufficient to support the ALJ's decision to give Dr. Walsh's opinion less weight. *See Prill v. Kijakazi*, 23 F.4th 738, 751 (7th Cir. 2022).

Staniszewski further disputes the ALJ's characterization of her relationship with Dr. Walsh as having "significant breaks." She contends that the ALJ's finding—that Staniszewski saw Dr. Walsh only three times in 2018—was inaccurate because the cover sheet for Dr. Walsh's medical notes suggests there were additional visits. But the ALJ did not say that the intermittency of this relationship was why she was giving Dr. Walsh's opinion little weight. The ALJ instead said she based that determination on the supportability of the opinion and its inconsistency with the rest of the record.

Staniszewski also challenges the ALJ's decision to afford Dr. Carney's opinion great weight because he had reviewed the entire record. But the ALJ was entitled to

consider that Dr. Carney's opinion was consistent with the rest of the record and that his opinion was based on a broader review of the record than was available to the other sources. *See Grotts v. Kijakazi*, 27 F.4th 1273, 1278 (7th Cir. 2022).

Staniszewski presents two additional arguments. She asserts that the ALJ doctored the transcript of the hearing, and that she has recently been diagnosed with an impairment to her hippocampus, which she contends could be the cause of her memory problems. But she presented neither of these arguments to the district court, so they are waived. *See Swiecichowski v. Dudek*, 133 F.4th 751, 756–57 (7th Cir. 2025).

AFFIRMED