

## **APPENDIX**

## APPENDIX – TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Appendix A – Court of Appeals Opinion (September 6, 2024) .....	1a
Appendix B – District Court Order Granting Defendant’s Motion To Dismiss First Amended Complaint (March 10, 2023) .....	24a
Appendix C – District Court Order Dismissing Complaint in Part with Partial Leave To Amend (May 19, 2022) .....	40a
Appendix D – District Court Order Dismissing First Amended Complaint in Part and Directing Service (August 2, 2022) .....	57a
Appendix E – Order of the Court of Appeals Denying Rehearing and Rehearing En Banc (June 5, 2025) .....	76a
Appendix F – Relevant Constitutional, Statutory, and Regulatory Provisions .....	117a
Appendix G – Post- <i>Egbert</i> Alternative-Remedies and Severity Cases .....	122a

APPENDIX A  
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

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KEKAI WATANABE,  
*Plaintiff-Appellant,*  
v.  
ESTELA DERR; K. ROBL, MR.; NIELSEN, NURSE;  
KWON, DR.,  
*Defendants-Appellees.*

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No. 23-15605

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D.C. No. 1:22-cv-00168-JAO-RT

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OPINION

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Appeal from the United States District Court for the  
District of Hawaii

Jill Otake, District Judge, Presiding

Argued and Submitted February 14, 2024

University of Hawaii Manoa

Filed September 6, 2024

Before: Richard A. Paez, Milan D. Smith, Jr.,  
and Lucy H. Koh, Circuit Judges.

Opinion by Judge Paez;

Partial Concurrence and Partial Dissent by  
Judge M. Smith

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(1a)

**OPINION**

PAEZ, Circuit Judge:

Kekai Watanabe (“Watanabe”), an incarcerated individual at Federal Detention Center (“FDC”) Honolulu, was brutally assaulted during a gang-related fight in July 2021. Watanabe sustained severe injuries, and he later learned that his coccyx had been fractured and bone chips had entered the surrounding soft tissue. Instead of transporting him to a hospital or permitting him to be examined by a specialist, the nurse at FDC Honolulu treated him with nothing more than over-the-counter medication for his pain.

Watanabe filed this damages action under *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics*,<sup>1</sup> alleging that his Eighth Amendment rights were violated when the medical staff at FDC Honolulu were deliberately indifferent to his serious medical needs. While a *Bivens* remedy—i.e., an implied damages remedy against federal officers for violating the Constitution—exists, the Supreme Court has approved of such a claim in only three cases. *See Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 582 U.S. 120, 131 (2017) (describing the three cases). One of those cases is *Carlson v. Green*, 446 U.S. 14 (1980), where the Court recognized an implied damages cause of action when prison officials failed to provide adequate medical treatment in violation of the Eighth Amendment. And while the Court has cautioned against extending *Bivens* remedies to new contexts, it has consistently maintained that the three recognized cases are still good law. *See, e.g., Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at

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<sup>1</sup> *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Fed. Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971), established that a violation of a citizen’s constitutional rights by a federal officer can give rise to a federal cause of action for damages.

131 (recognizing three “instances in which the Court has approved of an implied damages remedy under the Constitution itself”); *see also Egbert v. Boule*, 596 U.S. 482, 490-91 (2022) (iterating the Court’s reluctance to recognize new causes of action under *Bivens*, but nonetheless acknowledging that three *Bivens* causes of action exist, including the one articulated in *Carlson*).

Considering this backdrop, when a plaintiff brings a *Bivens* claim, we must apply a two-step inquiry. First, we ask whether a “case presents ‘a new *Bivens* context’—*i.e.*, is it ‘meaningful[ly]’ different from the three cases in which the Court has implied a damages action.” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492 (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139-40). If the case does not present a new context, we need not proceed to the second step, as “no further analysis is required.” *Lanuza v. Love*, 899 F.3d 1019, 1023 (9th Cir. 2018).

Here, because Watanabe’s claim is identical to *Carlson* in all meaningful respects, we need not consider the second step. Watanabe alleges he suffered deliberate medical indifference while incarcerated, in violation of the Eighth Amendment’s proscription against cruel and unusual punishment. *Carlson* dealt with the exact same issue. *See* 446 U.S. at 17-18. The district court thus erred in dismissing Watanabe’s Eighth Amendment claim, and we accordingly reverse and remand so that his claim can proceed.

### *I. Factual And Procedural Background*<sup>2</sup>

On July 12, 2021, a gang riot broke out in Unit 5A at FDC Honolulu, where individuals with rival gang affiliations were housed. Watanabe was sitting at a table in Unit 5A when he was attacked by multiple members of a rival

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<sup>2</sup> We take the factual background from the allegations in the First Amended Complaint, the operative complaint.

gang during the riot and was beaten with an improvised weapon known as a “lock in a sock.”

As a result of the beating, Watanabe sustained serious injuries. He and other individuals involved in the incident were sent to solitary confinement units. Prison officials documented Watanabe’s “known and visible injuries” and put him on sick call. That evening, Watanabe requested to be seen by medical staff. At that time, Watanabe described his headache and other severe pain he was experiencing to two correctional officers.

Several days later, Watanabe was seen by Defendant Francis Nielsen (“Nielsen”), a staff nurse at FDC Honolulu. Medical records reflect that Watanabe told Nielsen he was experiencing severe back pain, rating the pain as a “10.” Watanabe alleges that Nielsen told him “to stop being a cry baby.” When Watanabe requested treatment at a hospital, Nielsen refused, replying: “[Y]ou are not going to the hospital.”

Watanabe alleged that he was kept in solitary confinement for more than two months after the July 12 incident. During that period, he submitted multiple requests for medical attention. Watanabe was not taken to a hospital during this time, and to the extent he was treated, he was only given over-the-counter pain medication.

Around seven months later, in February 2022, Watanabe was finally diagnosed with a fractured coccyx, and an x-ray revealed that bone chips had migrated and entered the surrounding soft tissue. At that point, prison officials agreed to send Watanabe to be treated by a specialist.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of argument in February 2024, however, Watanabe’s counsel stated that Watanabe still had not been treated by the specialist.

Watanabe filed his original complaint pro se in the district court, alleging that four officials at FDC Honolulu, including Nielsen, violated his Eighth Amendment rights. He sought monetary damages and injunctive relief directing the warden of FDC Honolulu “to follow United States law regarding the housing of federal inmates.” Reviewing the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915, the district court dismissed the majority of Watanabe’s claims, but allowed his claim against Nielsen to proceed and granted him leave to amend.

Watanabe filed a First Amended Complaint (“FAC”) supplementing his allegations and again seeking damages. He did not explicitly renew his claim for injunctive relief. The district court, upon reviewing the pro se complaint under § 1915, dismissed the FAC in part, again allowing only the claim against Nielsen to proceed. Nielsen filed a motion to dismiss the claim against him for failure to state a claim, which the district court granted, concluding that “Watanabe cannot pursue his claim against Nielsen under *Bivens*” because “no such *Bivens* remedy exists” for Watanabe’s Eighth Amendment claim. Watanabe timely appealed.

We have jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1291, and we review de novo the district court’s grant of a motion to dismiss. *Chambers v. C. Herrera*, 78 F.4th 1100, 1103 (9th Cir. 2023). Dismissal for failure to state a claim under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) is appropriate only “if the complaint fails to allege ‘enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.’” *Fayer v. Vaughn*, 649 F.3d 1061, 1064 (9th Cir. 2011) (per curiam) (quoting *Bell Atl. Corp v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)).

## *II. Legal Framework*

*Bivens* cases require a two-step inquiry. First, we must “ask whether the case presents ‘a new *Bivens* context’—*i.e.*, is it ‘meaningful[ly]’ different from the three

cases in which the Court has implied a damages action.” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492 (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139-40). Factors to consider in analyzing whether the case presents a new context include:

[T]he rank of the officers involved; the constitutional right at issue; the generality or specificity of the official action; the extent of judicial guidance as to how an officer should respond to the problem or emergency to be confronted; the statutory or other legal mandate under which the officer was operating; the risk of disruptive intrusion by the Judiciary into the functioning of other branches; or the presence of potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider.

*Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at 139-40. If upon undertaking this analysis, we determine that the case does not present a new context, “no further analysis is required.” *Lanuza*, 899 F.3d at 1023.

Second, if we determine that the case *does* present a new context, we must then ask whether there “are ‘special factors’ indicating that the Judiciary is at least arguably less equipped than Congress to ‘weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.’” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492 (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 136). If any reason exists “to think that Congress might be better equipped to create a damages remedy,” we cannot recognize a new *Bivens* remedy. *Id.* at 492.

### *III. Bivens Analysis*

Watanabe argues that because his claim is similar to *Carlson*, it falls within an established *Bivens* context and does not require proceeding to the second step of the analysis. Defendants argue that because Watanabe’s claim “differs from prior *Bivens* cases in a meaningful way,” it presents a new context and requires further analysis

under the second step. Defendants additionally contend that, at the second step, Watanabe’s claim fails because Congress has “provided alternative remedial processes for [Watanabe] to vindicate his claim.”

Importantly, this appeal is from an order dismissing Watanabe’s FAC under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). At this stage in the proceeding, Watanabe only needs to “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 672, 678 (2009). We are therefore required to accept Watanabe’s well-pleaded allegations as true. *See id.* Thus, we emphasize that we do not make any determinations as to the *merits* of Watanabe’s claim—rather, we are only concerned with whether the allegations, on their face, present a claim that is sufficiently analogous to the one in *Carlson*.

Watanabe is correct that his claim does not present a new *Bivens* context. For the reasons discussed below, the district court erred in dismissing his claim.

#### A. Eighth Amendment Claim

In *Carlson*, the Supreme Court recognized an implied cause of action under the Eighth Amendment against prison officials who acted with deliberate indifference to an incarcerated individual’s serious medical needs. 446 U.S. at 16 n.1. There, Jones, an inmate in a federal correctional center, died after having an asthma attack. *Id.* At the time of his asthma attack, “no doctor was on duty and none was called in.” *Stanard v. Dy*, 88 F.4th 811, 816 (9th Cir. 2023) (citing *Green v. Carlson*, 581 F.2d 669, 671 (7th Cir. 1978)).

Prison officials kept Jones in the “facility against the advice of doctors,” failed to “give him competent medical attention for some eight hours” after the asthma attack, administered antipsychotic drugs that worsened his condition, and failed to transfer him to an outside hospital.

*Carlson*, 446 U.S. at 16 n.1. Jones's estate sued, alleging that "these acts and omissions" caused Jones's death, and that the prison officials were "deliberately indifferent to Jones's serious medical needs" in violation of the Eighth Amendment. *Id.* The Supreme Court recognized that such a scenario gave rise to a *Bivens* cause of action. *Id.*

#### B. Step One Inquiry

The parties in this case agree that *Carlson* is the appropriate analogue to Watanabe's case. To determine whether Watanabe's *Bivens* claim can proceed, we must first ask whether the case presents a "new context" from that of *Carlson*. *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492. Although there exists "no definitive list of how meaningful differences must be to create a new *Bivens* context," the "non-exhaustive series of considerations" laid out in *Ziglar* provide a useful starting point. *Stanard*, 88 F.4th at 816. Analyzing Watanabe's claim under the *Ziglar* factors, it is clear that his claim does not meaningfully differ from *Carlson*.

##### 1. *Ziglar Non-Exhaustive Factors*

The first factor is the rank of the officers involved. *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139-40. The rank of the officials involved here is the same as in *Carlson*: Nielsen is a prison nurse just as one of the defendants in *Carlson*, William Walters, was a prison nurse. *Carlson*, 446 U.S. at 16 n.1; *Green*, 581 F.2d at 671. The second factor, "the constitutional right at issue," *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 140, is also the same as in *Carlson*: the right under the Eighth Amendment to be free from cruel and unusual punishment through deliberate medical indifference. And Watanabe's claim is also identical to *Carlson* with respect to the third factor, "the generality or specificity of the official action." *Id.* Watanabe alleged official action to the same degree of specificity as that alleged in *Carlson*—"acts and omissions" that were deliberately indifferent to Watanabe's serious medical

condition. Such alleged official actions include the refusal to transport Watanabe to an outside hospital and the failure to provide him competent medical attention. *Carlson*, 446 U.S. at 16 n.1.

The fourth *Ziglar* factor is “the extent of judicial guidance as to how an officer should respond to the problem or emergency to be confronted.” 582 U.S. at 140. Here, judicial guidance as to how a Bureau of Prisons (“BOP”) officer should respond to an inmate’s serious medical condition is significantly more developed than it was in *Carlson*. Nielsen was working as part of the BOP’s medical staff, as were the defendants in *Carlson*. Thus, at the time of the incident in 2021, Nielsen would at least have had the judicial guidance from *Carlson*—i.e., that BOP medical staff cannot act with deliberate indifference to an inmate’s serious medical needs—that has existed since the case was decided in 1980. *See* 446 U.S. at 14.

*Carlson*, however, is far from the only guidance that BOP medical staff would have to rely on in this case. There exists an abundance of judicial guidance arising from federal litigation of Eighth Amendment claims for deliberate medical indifference brought against state officials under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. This case law provides ample guidance to BOP officials about how to appropriately respond to the serious medical conditions of incarcerated individuals. *See, e.g., Jett v. Penner*, 439 F.3d 1091, 1096 (9th Cir. 2006) (concluding that incarcerated individual who brought a §1983 claim alleging a violation of the Eighth Amendment for an untreated broken thumb “need not show his harm was substantial,” and presented sufficient evidence that state prison officials were deliberately indifferent to his condition); *Colwell v. Bannister*, 763 F.3d 1060, 1069-70 (9th Cir. 2014) (holding that incarcerated individual had a claim under § 1983 for deliberate medical

indifference where state prison officials denied his requests for cataract surgery, resulting in blindness in one eye).

The fifth factor, “the statutory or other legal mandate under which the officer was operating,” *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 140, is the same here as in *Carlson*, as both sets of defendants were operating as BOP medical staff. And Watanabe’s claim also does not meaningfully differ from *Carlson* with respect to the sixth *Ziglar* factor: “the risk of disruptive intrusion by the Judiciary into the functioning of other branches.” *Id.* This case does not present a risk of intrusion by the judiciary into the operations of the BOP any more than what *Carlson* already permits.

The final *Ziglar* factor asks about the “presence of potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider.” *Id.* The district court concluded that “although Watanabe’s claim has some parallels to the claims in *Carlson*, the specifics of [his] allegations are dissimilar in both their ‘nature and severity’ from the facts in *Carlson*.” As discussed below, because the nature and severity of Watanabe’s claim do not meaningfully differ from the nature and severity of the claim alleged in *Carlson*, the district court erred in reaching this conclusion.

## 2. *Nature*

The district court determined that the “nature” of Watanabe’s claim was meaningfully different from the claim in *Carlson*. The court characterized Watanabe’s allegation as an “interfere[nce] with the proper diagnosis and treatment of his injuries by denying his request to be taken to the hospital,” and distinguished this from the claim in *Carlson*, which the court characterized as “largely based on treatment provided to [Jones] during a medical emergency.” On appeal, Nielsen reiterates this argument, stressing that Watanabe’s claim is “about what Nielsen

did not do”—i.e., an omission—whereas the *Carlson* claim was about “numerous overt actions.”

This purported distinction based on the “nature” of the claims is unfounded. Watanabe alleges that Nielsen violated his Eighth Amendment rights through both overt acts and omissions. True, Watanabe contends that Nielsen violated his Eighth Amendment rights by failing to order that he be transported to an outside hospital—but he also alleges that the on-site treatment he received (an overt act) was woefully inadequate. Further, the district court incorrectly characterized *Carlson*, because Jones’s estate similarly alleged both overt actions, such as the use of a “respirator known to be inoperative,” and omissions, such as the delay “for too long a time [of Jones’s] transfer to an outside hospital.” *Carlson*, 446 U.S. 16 n.1. The nature of Watanabe’s claim is thus functionally identical to the nature of the claim in *Carlson*.

Additionally, Nielsen’s attempt to distinguish this case on the basis of the “nature” of the claim is unsupported by our precedent. We have previously recognized that if denial of proper medical treatment—an “omission,” according to the district court’s characterization—is the underlying basis of a *Bivens* claim, it may proceed.

Indeed, in *Stanard v. Dy*, we held that an incarcerated individual’s Eighth Amendment claim that prison officials denied him treatment for Hepatitis C did not present a new *Bivens* context, using *Carlson* as its analogue. 88 F.4th at 818. There, Stanard did not allege any “overt action”—rather, he alleged that his rights were violated because prison officials continually denied his requests for treatment, showing a deliberate indifference to his serious medical needs. *Id.* at 813-15. Reversing the district court’s dismissal order and holding that the claim did not arise in a new *Bivens* context, we explained that “[d]elaying treatment is an established

example of deliberate indifference to a serious medical need, in violation of the Eighth Amendment.” *Id.* at 817 (citing *Jett*, 439 F.3d at 1096).

And in *Chambers v. C. Herrera*, the plaintiff alleged that prison officials failed to treat his broken arm and wrist for six weeks. 78 F.4th at 1103, 1108. There, we characterized the claim in *Carlson* as the “failure to provide adequate medical treatment,” *id.* at 1106, and concluded that the plaintiff’s claim “would be the same constitutional right in *Carlson*,” *id.* at 1108. Because the plaintiff was proceeding pro se and failed to allege certain facts, we concluded that it was “unclear from his complaint” whether his claim presented a new context and remanded to determine whether he could amend his complaint to allege additional facts. *Id.* We nonetheless preserved the possibility that his *Bivens* claim—failure to treat a broken arm for a period of time—could be viable as an analogue to *Carlson*. *Id.* (“The claim would be the same constitutional right in *Carlson*. But the other *Egbert* factors would need to be addressed. . . .”).

Watanabe alleged that Nielsen’s overt actions and omissions resulted in a violation of his Eighth Amendment rights, making the nature of his claim functionally identical to the nature of the claim in *Carlson*. But even if Watanabe had only alleged an omission—e.g., that his requests for treatment were repeatedly denied—his claim would still be one of deliberate medical indifference, a viable *Bivens* cause of action. In short, focusing on an overt action versus a failure to act misconstrues the required analysis. The nature of Watanabe’s claim is virtually identical to the nature of the claim in *Carlson*: prison officials were deliberately indifferent to their respective serious medical needs. This kind of claim has long been recognized as one of the three *Bivens* causes of action. See *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 490-91. The

district court thus erred in distinguishing Watanabe's claim on this ground.

### *3. Severity*

The district court also distinguished Watanabe's claim from *Carlson* on the basis that "the severity of Watanabe's claim does not compare to the seriousness of the claims in *Carlson*," reasoning that "[w]hile the pain that Watanabe experienced because of his fractured coccyx and bone chips is certainly regrettable, it is not akin to the medical emergency faced by the inmate in *Carlson* that ultimately resulted in that inmate's death." On appeal, Defendants emphasize this purported difference, arguing that "[t]he difference between [Watanabe's] alleged on-going pain management and the life-threatening condition in *Carlson* is meaningfully different."

The district court erred in drawing this conclusion, and Defendants' arguments in support of it are not persuasive. Most glaringly, this conclusion misconstrues the law. A plaintiff need not suffer death or a life-threatening injury for his claim to be sufficiently analogous to *Carlson*. In *Chambers*, we held that it could be possible for an incarcerated person to bring a viable *Bivens* claim where he had suffered a broken arm and was denied treatment. 78 F.4th at 1108. And in *Stanard*, we held that a *Bivens* claim for repeated denial of Hepatitis C treatment while incarcerated did not present a new context from *Carlson*. 88 F.4th at 817. In doing so, we reaffirmed that a plaintiff need not allege a harm as severe as the one in *Carlson*, noting that "even assuming [the plaintiff] received less deficient care than the inmate in *Carlson*, that difference in degree is not a meaningful difference giving rise to a new context," because the underlying harm was still a "failure to provide medical attention evidencing deliberate indifference to serious medical needs." *Id.*; *see also Jett*, 439 F.3d at 1098

(concluding that the prison officials’ failure to treat the plaintiff’s broken thumb could constitute deliberate indifference to a serious medical condition).

As in *Stanard*, even if we assume that Watanabe received less deficient care than Jones in *Carlson*, this is not a meaningful difference. Watanabe was injured in July 2021, his injury resulted in a serious medical condition, and the condition has caused extreme pain ever since. He repeatedly complained about the pain to prison medical personnel, and he described the pain as a “10” on a scale from one to ten. It was not until seven months after his initial complaints that he was finally diagnosed with a fractured coccyx, and at the time he filed his complaint, over one year after the initial injury, he had still not seen a specialist.

Failure to respond to an incarcerated individual’s serious medical need, even if that need is not technically life-threatening, can constitute deliberate indifference in violation of the Eighth Amendment. *See, e.g., Jett*, 439 F.3d at 1096. The district court thus erred in concluding that Watanabe’s claim differed meaningfully from *Carlson* on the basis that his claim was not as severe.

#### *4. Alternative Remedial Programs*

The district court further concluded that the existence of alternative remedial structures within the BOP constituted a “special factor” that weighed in favor of finding a new context. The court noted that the BOP’s administrative remedy program<sup>4</sup> “was not considered by the Court in

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<sup>4</sup> The Administrative Remedy Program was created “to allow an inmate to seek formal review of an issue relating to any aspect of his/her own confinement,” 28 C.F.R. § 542.10(a), and “applies to all inmates in institutions operated by the [BOP],” § 542.10(b). The program allows incarcerated individuals to “(1) present[] an issue of concern informally to staff,” “(2) submit[] a formal request for

*Carlson*,” and thus concluded that its existence offered “another reason that Watanabe’s claim arises in a new context.” The district court erred in this conclusion, as the existence of alternative remedial structures does not render this case a new context.

In *Egbert*, the Supreme Court clarified that the existence of alternative remedial structures can be one “special factor,” to be considered at the *second* step of the *Bivens* analysis. 596 U.S. at 493, 498. Here, we are not required to undertake the second step of the analysis, because we conclude that Watanabe’s case is not meaningfully different from *Carlson*, and thus does not present a new context. And even if we were to consider this factor at step one, we have previously held that a claim similar to Watanabe’s does not present a new *Bivens* context, notwithstanding the fact that the incarcerated individual had access to and used the BOP’s administrative complaint system. *See Stanard*, 88 F.4th at 814, 818.

\* \* \*

The dissent acknowledges that “Watanabe’s claim is, at least superficially, similar to *Carlson*,” but nonetheless concludes that “the distinctions” between the two are enough to create a new *Bivens* context. Dissent at 23. The dissent makes these distinctions improperly, however. Concluding that Nielsen’s response was not as “flagrantly deficient” as the response in *Carlson*, for example, requires making an impermissible determination on the merits by weighing the evidence. Dissent at 21 (quoting *Stanard*, 88 F.4th at 817). The dissent notes that “had Nielsen known of Watanabe’s

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administrative remedies to a facility’s warden,” “(3) appeal[ ] to the appropriate Regional Director,” and “(4) appeal[ ] to the BOP’s General Counsel.” *Cacayorin v. Derr*, No. CV 23-00077 JMS-WRP, 2023 WL 2349596, at \*3 (D. Haw. Mar. 3, 2023).

broken coccyx and nevertheless refused to send him to a hospital,” the dissent may have reached a different outcome. Dissent at 21. But determining what Nielsen did or did not know requires us to evaluate and weigh the evidence, something we are not concerned with at this stage in the proceedings. Instead, we are concerned only with whether Watanabe’s claim—consisting of allegations we presently take as true—falls within the same context as *Carlson*. See *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678; see also *Stanard*, 88 F.4th at 817 (“[E]ven assuming that [the petitioner] received less deficient care . . . that difference in degree is not a meaningful difference [because the petitioner] seeks a damages remedy for failure to provide medical attention evidencing deliberate indifference to serious medical needs.”).

In all meaningful respects, Watanabe’s claim is functionally identical to the claim asserted in *Carlson*. The district court erred in proceeding to the second step of the *Bivens* analysis and dismissing Watanabe’s claim. This case does not present a new *Bivens* context at step one, and thus “no further analysis is required.” *Lanuza*, 899 F.3d at 1023.

#### *IV. Injunctive Relief*

On appeal, Watanabe also contends that the district court erroneously dismissed his request for injunctive relief against the other defendants related to his ongoing medical care. Watanabe sought equitable relief in his original complaint, but the district court dismissed this claim with leave to amend. In his FAC, Watanabe did not specifically renew his claim for equitable relief and sought only monetary damages. The district court dismissed all of Watanabe’s claims in the FAC without prejudice, concluding that he could not bring claims for equitable relief under *Bivens*. At oral argument before this court, Watanabe’s counsel represented that Watanabe had not yet received treatment from a specialist.

Before Watanabe obtained counsel for this appeal, he had proceeded pro se in the district court. We are “obligated to ‘liberally construe’ documents filed pro se.” *Ross v. Williams*, 950 F.3d 1160, 1173 n.19 (9th Cir. 2020) (en banc) (cleaned up) (quoting *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (1976)). This obligation means that “courts must frequently look to the contents of a pro se filing rather than its form.” *Id.*; *see also Adams v. Nankervis*, 902 F.2d 1578 (9th Cir. 1990), at \*2 (“We recognize that pro se litigants, especially prisoners, must be given special solicitude.”).

Because we construe Watanabe’s pro se filings “liberally,” *see Ross*, 950 F.3d at 1173 n.19, we interpret his requests for injunctive relief as official capacity claims not under *Bivens*, but rather as standalone claims for equitable relief. On remand, he may request leave from the district court to clarify his claim for injunctive relief, and if warranted, seek appropriate injunctive relief. We thus remand to the district court to address in its discretion whether Watanabe may amend his request for injunctive relief and to address any claim for injunctive relief in the first instance.

#### *V. Conclusion*

Watanabe alleges that prison officials were deliberately indifferent to his serious medical needs, in violation of the Eighth Amendment. This is functionally identical to the context in *Carlson*, where the Supreme Court recognized an implied cause of action under the Eighth Amendment. The district court thus erred in dismissing Watanabe’s *Bivens* claim.

Accordingly, we REVERSE and REMAND for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

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M. SMITH, Circuit Judge, concurring in part and dissenting in part:

The Supreme Court has reminded us time and time again that “expanding the *Bivens* remedy is . . . a ‘disfavored’ judicial activity” and that “even a modest extension” of the remedy, to a new context or new category of defendants, “is still an extension.” *Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 582 U.S. 120, 135, 147 (2017). Because Watanabe’s claim is meaningfully different than *Carlson v. Green*, 446 U.S. 14 (1980), I respectfully dissent as to the reinstatement of his *Bivens* claim. I concur in the majority’s decision to remand to the district court his claim for injunctive relief.

\* \* \*

In *Bivens v. Six Unknown Federal Narcotics Agents*, the Supreme Court held that a plaintiff could seek monetary damages for violation of his Fourth Amendment rights by federal agents. 403 U.S. 388, 397 (1971). Eight years later, the Court held that a damages remedy was also “surely appropriate” for a suit against a Congressperson for alleged violations of Fifth Amendment Due Process. *Davis v. Passman*, 442 U.S. 228, 245 (1979). The following year, the Court again recognized a *Bivens* damages remedy in a suit against federal prison officials alleging deliberate indifference to medical needs in violation of the Eighth Amendment. *Carlson*, 446 U.S. at 20.

In a series of subsequent decisions, however, the Court repeatedly declined to further expand the scope of *Bivens*. In *Bush v. Lucas*, it held that a federal employee could not claim damages when his superiors allegedly violated his First Amendment rights, reasoning that “Congress is in a better position to decide whether or not the public interest would be served by creating” such a remedy. 462 U.S. 367, 390 (1983); *see also, e.g.*, *Chappell v. Wallace*, 462 U.S. 296 (1983). In 2009, the Court summarized its recent juris-

prudence by noting that *Bivens* actions were “implied,” and therefore “disfavored.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 675 (2009). Citing separation-of-powers principles, the Court has not extended *Bivens* relief to previously unrecognized contexts. *See Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 135-36; *Egbert v. Boule*, 596 U.S. 482, 519 n.3 (2022).

The first step in a *Bivens* analysis is to determine whether a case presents a new *Bivens* context or a new category of defendants. *See Hernandez v. Mesa*, 589 U.S. 93, 102 (2020). “If the answer to this question is ‘no,’ then no further analysis is required.” *Lanuza v. Love*, 899 F.3d 1019, 1023 (9th Cir. 2018) (citation omitted). If the case does present a new context, the court then must determine whether “special factors” indicate that the judiciary is “at least arguably less equipped than Congress to weigh the costs and benefits” of extending the *Bivens* remedy to this new context. *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492 (internal quotation marks omitted). In *Egbert*, the Supreme Court observed that the “new context” and “special factors” steps “often resolve to a single question: whether there is any reason to think that Congress might be better equipped to create a damages remedy.” *Id.* But our post-*Egbert* cases nonetheless continue to “apply a two-step framework, asking first whether the claim arises in a new context, and second, if so, whether other special factors counsel hesitation against extending *Bivens*.” *Harper v. Nedd*, 71 F.4th 1181, 1185 (9th Cir. 2023) (citation omitted).

A *Bivens* claim arises in a new context if it differs “in a meaningful way from previous *Bivens* cases.” *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139. Here, the relevant *Bivens* case is *Carlson*. 446 U.S. at 20. In *Carlson*, the Court recognized a *Bivens* remedy against prison officials who were deliberately indifferent to an inmate’s serious medical condition. *Id.* at 16 n.1. Against the advice of doctors, the inmate was de-

tained at a corrections facility with “gross[ly] inadequate” medical facilities. *Id.* When he suffered an asthma attack, no doctor was on duty, and no doctor was subsequently called in. Instead, after some delay, a medical training assistant tried to use a broken respirator on the inmate. When the inmate pulled away and said the respirator was making his breathing worse, the assistant administered an antipsychotic medication. *Id.* The inmate went into respiratory arrest and died. *Id.*

The Supreme Court’s “understanding of a ‘new context’ is broad.” *Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 102. Although there is no definitive list of how meaningful differences must be to create a new *Bivens* context, precedent provides a starting point. *Ziglar*, the first case in which the Supreme Court articulated the new context inquiry, provided a non-exhaustive series of considerations, including “the rank of the officers involved; the constitutional right at issue; the generality or specificity of the official action; the extent of judicial guidance as to how an officer should respond to the problem or emergency to be confronted; [and] the statutory or other legal mandate under which the officer was operating,” among others. 582 U.S. at 139-40.

The Supreme Court has stated that “[a] claim may arise in a new context even if it is based on the same constitutional provision as a claim in a case in which a damages remedy was previously recognized.” *Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 103. Thus, even where a “case has significant parallels to one of the [Supreme Court’s] previous *Bivens* cases,” it can present a new context. *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 147.

Watanabe’s Eighth Amendment *Bivens* claim presents a “new context.” His claim is meaningfully different than *Carlson* when considering *in toto*: (1) the severity of the mistreatment and (2) the severity of the medical need.

First, the severity of Watanabe’s mistreatment does not come close to that in *Carlson*. *See Stanard v. Dy*, 88 F.4th 811, 817 (9th Cir. 2023) (considering the “[s]everity of [m]istreatment” in determining whether plaintiff’s *Bivens* claim arose in a new context). On July 16, 2021, few days after the riot, Nielsen met with Watanabe and performed a physical examination. The examination indicated that, although Watanabe appeared distressed and suffered from substantial pain, his results were within normal limits. Nielsen treated Watanabe accordingly: Nielsen spoke to an on-call provider who authorized an order for painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs, encouraged gentle stretching exercises as tolerated, and made a note to follow-up with a sick call if necessary. This response was “less flagrantly deficient than in *Carlson*.” *See id.* By contrast, had Nielsen known of Watanabe’s broken coccyx and nevertheless refused to send him to a hospital for further care, this case would look closer to *Carlson*. *See id.* (noting that medical personnel “attempted to use a respirator *known* to be inoperative” (emphasis added)). But the record does not indicate, nor does Watanabe allege, that Nielsen knew, or should have known, the extent of Watanabe’s injury at the time of his evaluation. Absent such an allegation, and in light of the normal results of the physical examination, the prison’s response here was meaningfully less severe.

The majority suggests that “even if we assume that Watanabe received less deficient care than [the plaintiff] in *Carlson*, this is not a meaningful difference” because (1) Watanabe’s injury “resulted in a serious medical condition,” which caused him extreme pain, (2) he described the pain as a ten on a scale from one to ten, and (3) it took seven months to diagnose him with a fractured coccyx. That Watanabe suffered from his injury without

treatment is certainly regrettable. But the majority fails to articulate, as does Watanabe, how the prison should have known—without the benefit of hindsight—to send Watanabe to an outside hospital. As noted, his test results were normal. Does a *Bivens* claim arise every time a prison refuses to send an inmate for outside treatment if they report severe pain? Such a rule would violate the spirit of *Bivens* and its progeny.

Second, as the district court noted, Watanabe’s medical need was less severe than that in *Carlson*, which resulted in that inmate’s death. That is not to suggest that one needs to face a life-threatening condition to fall within *Carlson*. *See, e.g., Chambers v. C. Herrera*, 78 F.4th 1100, 1108 (9th Cir. 2023) (treating medical indifference claim based on broken arm as “mostly dead” but “slightly alive”). But the difference in severity is meaningful and weighs in favor of finding a new context under *Ziglar*. *See* 582 U.S. at 147 (“[E]ven a modest extension is still an extension.”).

The cases cited by the majority, where the *Bivens* claim survived, are distinguishable. *Cf., e.g., Stanard*, 88 F.4th at 817 (remanding claim where plaintiff was repeatedly informed he “would not receive *any* . . . treatment at [the prison] at all); *Chambers*, 78 F.4th at 1108 (remanding claim where physician’s assistant knew of broken arm and intentionally refused to treat injury to cover up assault); *Jett v. Penner*, 439 F.3d 1091 (9th Cir. 2006) (lacking discussion of *Bivens*). For the reasons above, the district court did not err in finding that Watanabe’s case presents a new context.

Next, in step two of *Bivens*, the district court held that special factors counsel against recognizing a remedy. The district court explained that it could not recognize a new *Bivens* remedy because “alternative remedies are available to Watanabe,” including the Bureau of Prisons’ alternative remedial program and the Federal Tort Claims Act. Wa-

tanabe does not challenge this part of the decision on appeal. In his brief, he states: “*Bivens* remedies may be available in ‘new contexts’ too. But as this appeal does not involve a new context, the circumstances that warrant an extension of *Bivens* are not discussed here.”

\* \* \*

Even a case that has “significant parallels to *Carlson*” may constitute an extension of *Carlson* to a new context. *See Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 147. That is the case here. Although Watanabe’s claim is, at least superficially, similar to *Carlson*—i.e., brought pursuant to the Eighth Amendment involving an injury suffered in prison—the distinctions are “sufficient to make this a new *Bivens* context.” *See Harper*, 71 F.4th at 1186. I respectfully dissent as to the reinstatement of Watanabe’s *Bivens* claim.

**APPENDIX B**  
**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
**FOR THE DISTRICT OF HAWAII**

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KEKAI WATANABE, #94102-022,  
Plaintiff,  
vs.  
ESTELA DERR, ET AL.,  
Defendants.

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CIVIL No. 22-00168 JAO-RT

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**ORDER GRANTING DEFENDANT'S MOTION  
TO DISMISS FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT**

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Pro se Plaintiff Kekai Watanabe (“Watanabe”) brought this suit pursuant to *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971), alleging that Defendant Francis Nielsen (“Nielsen”), a paramedic at the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu, Hawaii (“FDC Honolulu”), violated the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment by declining Watanabe’s request to visit a hospital after he was injured during a gang riot.<sup>1</sup> See ECF No. 8 at 6-9. Nielsen filed a Motion to Dismiss First Amended Complaint (“Motion”) arguing, among other things, that Watanabe’s claim

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<sup>1</sup> Watanabe also asserted claims against the warden, a unit manager, and a doctor at FDC Honolulu, but those claims were previously dismissed by the Court. See ECF No. 9 at 11-16, 18-19.

is not cognizable under *Bivens*.<sup>2</sup> See ECF No. 20; ECF No. 20-1 at 10-23. The Court agrees that Watanabe cannot pursue his claim against Nielsen under *Bivens* and, for the reasons stated below, GRANTS the Motion.

### I. BACKGROUND

On July 12, 2021, Watanabe was severely beaten during a gang riot at FDC Honolulu with an improvised weapon, called a “lock in a sock.” ECF No. 8 at 7. After order was restored, prison officials documented Watanabe’s known and visible injuries, and they told Watanabe that he would be put on sick call. *Id.* Later the same night, Watanabe asked to be seen by medical staff. *Id.* Watanabe discussed his severe pain and headaches with two correctional officers who are not parties to this action. *Id.*

At some point, Watanabe also described his medical condition to Nielsen.<sup>3</sup> *Id.* Nielsen told Watanabe “to stop being

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<sup>2</sup> Even assuming that Watanabe’s claims were cognizable, Nielsen argues that qualified immunity shields him from personal liability. See ECF No. 20; ECF No. 20-1 at 23-28. Because no *Bivens* remedy is available to Watanabe, the Court does not reach Nielsen’s qualified immunity argument. See *Pettibone v. Russell*, 59 F.4th 449, 457 (9th Cir. 2023) (“Because [plaintiff] has no cause of action under *Bivens*, we need not consider whether [defendant] would be entitled to qualified immunity.”).

<sup>3</sup> Citing Watanabe’s medical records, Nielsen asserts that this meeting took place on July 16, 2021—that is, four days after the riot. See ECF No. 20-1 at 8; ECF No. 20-3 at 5. Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), however, this Court’s review is generally limited to the contents of the complaint. See *Sprewell v. Golden State Warriors*, 266 F.3d 979, 988 (9th Cir. 2001). Although “[a] court may . . . consider certain materials—documents attached to the complaint, documents incorporated by reference in the complaint, or matters of judicial notice—without converting the motion to dismiss into a motion for summary judgment,” *United States v. Ritchie*, 342 F.3d 903, 908 (9th Cir. 2003), Watanabe did not attach his medical records to the First Amended Complaint, he does not refer to them in that pleading, and the Court is currently unable to take judicial notice of those

a cry baby.” *Id.* Nielsen also denied Watanabe’s request to be taken to the hospital. *Id.* Watanabe does not describe any further interactions with Nielsen.

According to Watanabe, he remained in FDC Honolulu’s special housing unit for two months after the riot. *Id.* During this period, Watanabe submitted numerous requests for medical attention. *Id.* Although prison officials provided Watanabe with over-the-counter pain medication, he received no “actual treatment.” *Id.*

Sometime in February 2022, Watanabe was diagnosed with a fractured coccyx, with bone chips in the surrounding soft tissue. *Id.* at 7, 9. Prison officials then agreed to send Watanabe to a specialist. *Id.* at 9. As of July 2, 2022, Watanabe was still waiting to see a specialist. *Id.* at 6.

On July 7, 2022, the Court received the operative pleading in this suit—that is, the First Amended Complaint (“FAC”). *Id.* In the FAC, Watanabe alleges that Nielsen violated the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment by “denying him proper medical treatment that would have properly diagnosed and treated his injury.” *Id.* at 9. Watanabe seeks three million dollars in damages. ECF No. 8 at 11.

Nielsen filed the Motion on January 13, 2023, arguing that the FAC should be dismissed because Watanabe’s constitutional tort claim presents a new context, which is not cognizable under the Supreme Court’s current *Bivens* framework. *See* ECF No. 20 at 2; *see also* ECF No. 20-1 at 10-23. Watanabe filed neither an opposition to the Motion nor a statement setting forth his position on the Motion.

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documents. *See Dillingham v. Garcia*, No. 1:19-cv-00461-AWIGSA-PC, 2019 WL 2577196, at \*2 (E.D. Cal. June 24, 2019) (“The court shall not take judicial notice of prison medical records absent a showing that the medical records were matters of public record.”).

*See* LR7.2. The Court will decide the Motion without a hearing pursuant to Local Rule 7.1(d). *See* ECF No. 21.

## II. STANDARD OF REVIEW

Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) authorizes dismissal of a complaint that fails “to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6). On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss, “the court accepts the facts alleged in the complaint as true,” and “[d]ismissal can be based on the lack of a cognizable legal theory or the absence of sufficient facts alleged.” *UMG Recordings, Inc. v. Shelter Capital Partners LLC*, 718 F.3d 1006, 1014 (9th Cir. 2013) (quoting *Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Dep’t*, 901 F.2d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 1988)) (alteration in original). Conclusory allegations of law, unwarranted deductions of fact, and unreasonable inferences are insufficient to defeat a motion to dismiss. *See Sprewell*, 266 F.3d at 988; *Nat'l Ass'n for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis v. Cal. Bd. of Psychology*, 228 F.3d 1043, 1049 (9th Cir. 2000) (citation omitted). Furthermore, the court need not accept as true allegations that contradict matters properly subject to judicial notice. *See Sprewell*, 266 F.3d at 988.

“To survive a motion to dismiss, a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to ‘state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.’” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)). Facial plausibility exists “when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556). “Threadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements, do not suffice.” *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). “[W]here the well-pleaded facts do not permit the court to infer more than the mere possibility of misconduct,

the complaint has alleged—but it has not ‘show[n]’—‘that the pleader is entitled to relief.’” *Id.* at 679 (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2)) (some alterations in original).

Watanabe is appearing pro se; thus, the Court liberally construes his pleadings. *See Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007) (per curiam); *Eldridge v. Block*, 832 F.2d 1132, 1137 (9th Cir. 1987). The Court also recognizes that “[u]nless it is absolutely clear that no amendment can cure the defect . . . a pro se litigant is entitled to notice of the complaint’s deficiencies and an opportunity to amend prior to dismissal of the action.” *Lucas v. Dep’t of Corr.*, 66 F.3d 245, 248 (9th Cir. 1995); *see also Rowley v. Bannister*, 734 F.3d 967, 977-78 (9th Cir. 2013).

### **III. ANALYSIS**

Watanabe brought this suit pursuant to *Bivens* alleging that Nielsen violated the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment by “denying him proper medical treatment that would have properly diagnosed and treated his injury.” *See* ECF No. 8 at 9. Before the merits of this claim can be reached, the Court must first decide whether a *Bivens* remedy is available to Watanabe. *See, e.g., Manansingh v. United States*, Case No. 2:20-cv-01139-DWM, 2021 WL 2080190, at \*8 (D. Nev. May 24, 2021) (“In a constitutional action against a federal officer, a threshold consideration is whether a plaintiff may bring a *Bivens* suit in the first place.”). Because no such remedy exists, the FAC and this action must be dismissed.

#### **A. Legal Framework for Determining Whether a *Bivens* Remedy Exists**

While “Congress has made a cause of action available to any person who has suffered ‘the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws’ at the hands of someone acting under color of state law,” it “has not created a general cause of action

to redress violations of the Constitution by *federal* officers.” *Pettibone*, 59 F.4th at 454 (quoting 42 U.S.C. § 1983).

In three cases decided between 1971 and 1980, however, “the Supreme Court held that the Constitution contains an implied cause of action through which plaintiffs can seek damages from federal officers who violate their constitutional rights.” *Id.* In *Bivens*, the Court held that a plaintiff could seek damages from Federal Bureau of Narcotics agents who allegedly violated the Fourth Amendment right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures. 403 U.S. at 397. The Court extended the *Bivens* remedy in *Davis v. Passman*, where a plaintiff alleged that her employer, a Member of Congress, had discriminated against her because of her sex, in violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment. 442 U.S. 228, 230-31 (1979). Finally, in *Carlson v. Green*, the Court held that the estate of a deceased inmate could seek damages from federal prison officials who allegedly violated the inmate’s Eighth Amendment right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment by failing to treat severe asthma that ultimately resulted in the prisoner’s death. 446 U.S. 14, 16-18 (1980). “These three cases—*Bivens*, *Davis*, and *Carlson*—represent the only instances in which the Court has approved of an implied damages remedy under the Constitution itself.” *Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 582 U.S. 120, 132 (2017).

The Supreme Court “has made clear that expanding the *Bivens* remedy is now a ‘disfavored’ judicial activity.” *Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at 135 (citation omitted); *Egbert v. Boule*, 142 S. Ct. 1793, 1802 (2022) (“At bottom, creating a cause of action is a legislative endeavor.”). Indeed, the Supreme Court has indicated that “if [the Court] were called to decide *Bivens* today, [it] would decline to discover any implied causes of action in the Constitution.” *Id.* at 1809. Since 1980,

therefore, the Supreme Court “has ‘consistently refused to extend *Bivens* to any new context or new category of defendants.’”<sup>4</sup> *Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at 135 (citation omitted).

Now, when asked to imply a *Bivens* remedy, courts must use “caution.” *Egbert*, 142 S. Ct. at 1803. If there is even a “single sound reason” to think that Congress might doubt the efficacy or necessity of a damages remedy, courts must refrain from creating it. *Id.* Thus, “the most important question is who should decide whether to provide for a damages remedy, Congress or the courts?” *Id.* (citation omitted). In “most every case,” the answer will be Congress. *Id.*

In deciding whether a *Bivens* remedy is available in a particular case, courts apply a two-step framework. *Pettibone*, 59 F.4th at 454. At step one, courts “ask whether

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<sup>4</sup> The Supreme Court has declined to create a *Bivens* remedy in the following cases: a First Amendment suit against a federal employer, *see Bush v. Lucas*, 462 U.S. 367 (1983); a race discrimination suit against military officers, *see Chappell v. Wallace*, 462 U.S. 296 (1983); a substantive due process suit against military officers, *see United States v. Stanley*, 483 U.S. 669 (1987); a procedural due process suit against Social Security officials, *see Schweiker v. Chilicky*, 487 U.S. 412 (1988); a procedural due process suit against a federal agency for wrongful termination, *see FDIC v. Meyer*, 510 U.S. 471 (1994); an Eighth Amendment suit against a private halfway house operator under contract with the BOP, *see Corr. Servs. Corp. v. Malesko*, 534 U.S. 61 (2001); a claim of retaliation by Bureau of Land Management officials against plaintiff for his exercise of Fifth Amendment property rights, *see Wilkie v. Robbins*, 551 U.S. 537 (2007); a suit under the Fifth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments against United States Public Health Service personnel, *see Hui v. Castaneda*, 559 U.S. 799 (2010); an Eighth Amendment suit against prison guards at a private prison, *see Minneci v. Pollard*, 565 U.S. 118 (2012); a Fifth Amendment suit against Department of Justice officials, *see Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at 155; a Fourth and Fifth Amendment suit against a United States Border Patrol agent, *Hernandez v. Mesa*, 140 S. Ct. 735 (2020); and a First and Fourth Amendment suit against a United States Border Patrol Agent, *see Egbert*, 142 S. Ct. at 1793.

the case presents ‘a new *Bivens* context.’” *Egbert*, 142 S. Ct. at 1803. If the answer to this question is “no,” then no further analysis is required, and the claim may proceed. *See Lanuza v. Love*, 899 F.3d 1019, 1023 (9th Cir. 2018). If the answer is “yes,” then the court proceeds to step two. At step two, “a *Bivens* remedy is unavailable if there are ‘special factors’ indicating that the Judiciary is at least arguably less equipped than Congress to ‘weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.’”<sup>5</sup> *Pettibone*, 59 F.4th at 454 (citation omitted).

### B. Watanabe’s Claim Against Nielsen Presents a New Context

The Supreme Court’s “understanding of a ‘new context’ is broad.” *Hernandez*, 140 S. Ct. at 743. A case presents a new context if it is “different in a meaningful way from previous *Bivens* cases decided by [the Supreme Court].” *Abbas*, 582 U.S. at 139. The Supreme Court has provided a non-exhaustive list of differences that may be “meaningful” including the rank of the officers involved, the constitutional right at issue, the generality or specificity of the official action, the extent of judicial guidance as to how an officer should respond to the problem or emergency to be

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<sup>5</sup> In *Egbert*, the Supreme Court noted that these two steps “often resolve to a single question: whether there is any reason to think that Congress might be better equipped to create a damages remedy.” 142 S. Ct. at 1803. At least one court of appeals has suggested in dicta that this sentence “appear[s] to alter the existing two-step *Bivens* framework.” *Silva v. United States*, 45 F.4th 1134, 1139 (10th Cir. 2022). The Ninth Circuit, however, has stated that *Egbert* only “reiterate[d] the longstanding first step of the *Bivens* question” and “clarified” the second step. *Mejia v. Miller*, No. 21-56282, 2023 WL 2350630, at \*4 (9th Cir. Mar. 2, 2023); *see also Pettibone*, 59 F.4th at 454 (“Before affording a plaintiff a cause of action under *Bivens*, a court must go through two steps[.]”). The Court therefore applies the two-step framework, as clarified in *Egbert*, to analyze Watanabe’s claim.

confronted, the statutory or other legal mandate under which the officer was operating, the risk of disruptive intrusion by the Judiciary into the functioning of other branches of government, and the presence of potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider. *Id.* at 139-40.

The Supreme Court has stated that “[a] claim may arise in a new context even if it is based on the same constitutional provision as a claim in a case in which a damages remedy was previously recognized.” *Hernandez*, 140 S. Ct. at 743. Thus, even where a “case has significant parallels to one of the [Supreme Court’s] previous *Bivens* cases, it can present a new context. *Abbas*, 582 U.S. at 147. In other words, “even a modest extension is an extension.” *Id.*; see *Mejia*, 2023 WL 2350630, at \*5 (“[R]arely if ever is the Judiciary equally suited as Congress to extend *Bivens* even modestly.”).

The Supreme Court’s analysis in *Egbert* illustrates these principles. In *Egbert*, a bed-and-breakfast operator and Border Patrol confidential informant alleged, among other things, that a Border Patrol agent used excessive force on him while trying to conduct a search on the plaintiff’s property. 142 S. Ct. at 1801. While noting that *Egbert* and *Bivens* involved “similar allegations of excessive force and thus arguably present[ed] ‘almost parallel circumstances’ or a similar ‘mechanism of injury,’” the Supreme Court stated that these “superficial similarities [were] not enough to support the judicial creation of a cause of action.” *Id.* at 1805.

Here, although Watanabe’s claim has some parallels to the claims in *Carlson*, the specifics of Watanabe’s allegations are dissimilar in both their “nature and severity” from the facts in *Carlson*. *Martinez v. United States Bureau of Prisons*, Case No. 5:15-cv-02160-TJH (AFM), 2019 WL 5432052, at \*9 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 20, 2019), *report and*

*recommendation adopted*, 2019 WL 5424414 (C.D. Cal. Oct. 22, 2019), *aff'd*, 830 F. App'x 234 (9th Cir. 2020).

In *Carlson*, an inmate was diagnosed as a “chronic asthmatic” when he entered the federal prison system. *Green v. Carlson*, 581 F.2d 669, 671 (7th Cir. 1978), *aff'd*, 446 U.S. 14 (1980). The inmate was later hospitalized for eight days because of symptoms associated with this condition, and the treating physician recommended that the inmate be transferred to a different facility. *Id.* Despite the doctor’s recommendation, the inmate remained in the same facility. *Id.* Then, when the inmate was admitted to the prison hospital with an asthmatic attack, he was not seen by a doctor for eight hours. *Id.* As the inmate’s breathing became more difficult, a non-licensed nurse in charge of the prison hospital deserted the inmate to distribute medication elsewhere. *Id.* When the nurse returned, he attempted to use a respirator on the inmate. *Id.* The nurse did this despite being told two weeks earlier that the respirator was broken. *Id.* When the inmate told the nurse that the respirator was making his breathing worse, the nurse administered two doses of a drug contraindicated for someone suffering an asthmatic attack. *Id.* A half-hour after the second injection, the inmate suffered a respiratory arrest. *Id.* The nurse and another prison official then brought emergency equipment to administer an electric jolt to the inmate, but neither man knew how to operate machine. *Id.* Only at that point was the inmate taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead. *Id.*

Watanabe’s claim against Nielsen differs from the claims in *Carlson* in several important ways. First, the nature of Watanabe’s claim differs from those in *Carlson* because it does not relate to a course of medical treatment provided to him at FDC Honolulu. Instead, Watanabe alleges that, sometime after the riot ended, Nielsen

interfered with the proper diagnosis and treatment of his injuries by denying his request to be taken to the hospital. ECF No. 8 at 9. Although it is well settled that state prisoners can establish deliberate indifference in the context of an Eighth Amendment claim by showing that officials “intentionally interfered with . . . medical treatment,” *Lopez v. Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 1132 (9th Cir. 2000), that was not the basis for the claims in *Carlson*. Again, the claims in *Carlson* were largely based on treatment provided to a federal inmate during a medical emergency. Thus, Watanabe seeks an extension of *Bivens* to an area not addressed in *Carlson*. *See Donaldson v. Garland*, No. 2:21-cv-1178 TLN KJN P, 2022 WL 10189084, at \*3 (E.D. Cal. Oct. 17, 2022) (finding new context where plaintiff alleged that prison officials interfered with medical care by cancelling surgery), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2022 WL 17722326 (E.D. Cal. Dec. 15, 2022).

Second, the severity of Watanabe’s claim does not compare to the seriousness of the claims in *Carlson*. While the pain that Watanabe experienced because of his fractured coccyx and bone chips is certainly regrettable, it is not akin to the medical emergency faced by the inmate in *Carlson* that ultimately resulted in that inmate’s death. *See Washington v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, Civil Action No. 5:16-3913-BHH, 2022 WL 3701577, at \*5 (D.S.C. Aug. 26, 2022) (noting that “[p]laintiff’s *Bivens* claims do not involve a medical emergency, as did *Carlson*, but rather focus on a long term and ongoing course of medical treatment of Plaintiff’s chronic, non-fatal condition” in concluding that case presented a new context); *Peguero v. Quay*, No. 1:22-CV-00057, 2023 WL 2410882, at \*11 (M.D. Pa. Mar. 8, 2023) (concluding that chronic pain caused by two herniated discs, scoliosis, and nerve damage was a new

context because it did not involve a “medical life-threatening emergency”).

These differences in the “nature and severity” of Watanabe’s claims compared to those in *Carlson* are meaningful. *See Martinez*, 2019 WL 5432052, at \*9; *see also Prescott v. United States*, Case No. 2:20-cv-2740-SK, 2022 WL 18859316, at \*2 (C.D. Cal. Dec. 21, 2022) (concluding that assigning a federal prisoner to an inhospitable bed and refusing to move him even after a doctor’s order presented a new context), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2023 WL 2188692 (C.D. Cal. Feb. 22, 2023); *Davis v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, Case No. 5:21-cv-1475-CAS (SK), 2022 WL 18460704, at \*2 (C.D. Cal. Dec. 8, 2022), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2023 WL 405319 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 24, 2023) (concluding that federal prisoner’s claim that defendant performed an unauthorized surgical procedure presented a new context). Indeed, allowing Watanabe’s claims to proceed risks “transforming [the court] into an *ad hoc* medical review board tasked with deciding, with little to no judicial guidance, which medical errors, if any, cross the threshold into constitutional injury.”<sup>6</sup> *Washington*, 2022 WL 3701577, at \*5.

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<sup>6</sup> A few courts have allowed to proceed claims involving “medical treatment.” *See, e.g., Ibuado v. Fed. Prison Atwater*, 2023 WL 2312395, at \*4 (E.D. Cal. Mar. 1, 2023) (claims based on side effects of medication); *Dinkins v. United States*, 2022 WL 16735362, at \*6 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 19, 2022) (claims based on failure to treat sinus blockage), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2022 WL 15525746 (C.D. Cal. Oct. 27, 2022). These decisions are not instructive here, where Watanabe’s claim is based on interference with medical care, not a course of medical treatment. Moreover, the Court does not find the analyses in these decisions persuasive. Neither decision addresses the Supreme Court’s statement that “similar allegations,” “almost parallel circumstances,” or a “similar ‘mechanism of injury’” are only “superficial similarities,” and they are “not enough to support the judicial creation

Furthermore, the Supreme Court has stated that “the presence of potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider” is a relevant consideration in deciding whether a case presents a new context. *See Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at 140; *see also Egbert*, 142 S. Ct. 1793 (“[W]e have explained that a new context arises when there are ‘potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider.’”) (citation omitted). As explained in the following section, special factors weigh against recognizing a *Bivens* remedy for Watanabe’s claim, including the existence of the Federal Bureau of Prisons’ administrative remedy program. Because this factor was not considered by the Court in *Carlson*, this is another reason that Watanabe’s claim arises in a new context. *See Hoffman v. Preston*, No. 20-15396, 2022 WL 6685254, at \*1 (9th Cir. Oct. 11, 2022) (unpublished) (“Congress has not authorized a damages remedy in this context, and there are ‘rational reason[s],’ why it might not, for example, the existence of the Bureau of Prisons’ formal review process for inmate complaints.”) (citation omitted and brackets in original).

For all these reasons, Watanabe’s claim is meaningfully different from the claims in *Carlson*, and the court must proceed to step two.

### **C. Special Factors Counsel Against Recognizing a *Bivens* Remedy**

“[I]f a claim arises in a new context, a *Bivens* remedy is unavailable if there are ‘special factors’ indicating that the Judiciary is at least arguably less equipped than Congress

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of a cause of action.” 142 S. Ct. at 1805. Nor do these decisions address the Supreme Court’s warning that “a plaintiff cannot justify a *Bivens* extension based on ‘parallel circumstances’ with . . . *Carlson* unless he also satisfies the ‘analytic framework’ prescribed by the last four decades of intervening case law.” *Id.* at 1809.

to ‘weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.’” *Egbert*, 142 S. Ct. at 1803 (citation omitted). Thus, at step two, “[a] court faces only one question: whether there is *any* rational reason (even one) to think that Congress is better suited to ‘weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.’” *Id.* at 1805 (citation omitted). “If there is even a single ‘reason to pause before applying *Bivens* in a new context,’ a court may not recognize a *Bivens* remedy.” *Id.* (citation omitted). In conducting this analysis, courts must ask “‘broadly’ if there is any reason to think that ‘judicial intrusion’ into a given field might be ‘harmful’ or ‘inappropriate.’” *Id.* (citation omitted). If there is such a reason “or even if there is the ‘*potential*’ for such consequences, a court cannot afford a plaintiff a *Bivens* remedy.” *Id.* at 1805-06 (citation omitted). This will be the outcome in “most every case.” *Id.* at 1803.

For example, “[i]f there are alternative remedial structures in place, ‘that alone,’ like any special factor, is reason enough to ‘limit the power of the Judiciary to infer a new *Bivens* cause of action.’” *Id.* at 1804. It does not matter whether a *Bivens* remedy would disrupt the remedial scheme, nor does it matter whether the court should provide a remedy for a wrong that would otherwise go unaddressed. *Id.* Likewise, “it does not matter that ‘existing remedies do not provide complete relief.’” *Id.* (citation omitted). “So long as Congress or the Executive has created a remedial process that it finds sufficient to secure an adequate level of deterrence, the courts cannot second-guess that calibration by superimposing a *Bivens* remedy.” *Id.* at 1807.

Here, the Court cannot recognize a *Bivens* remedy because alternative remedies are available to Watanabe. First, the Executive, through the Federal Bureau of Prisons, has an alternative remedial program for federal prisoners like Watanabe. *See* 28 C.F.R. § 542.10 (“The purpose

of the Administrative Remedy Program is to allow an inmate to seek formal review of an issue relating to any aspect of his/her own confinement.”); *see also Malesko*, 534 U.S. at 74 (concluding that *Bivens* remedy was unavailable, in part, because “[i]nmates . . . have full access to remedial mechanisms established by the BOP, including . . . grievances filed through the BOP’s Administrative Remedy Program”); *Taylor v. Kobayashi*, No. 22-16017, 2023 WL 2400879, at \*1 (9th Cir. Mar. 8, 2023) (unpublished) (concluding that “the Bureau of Prisons’ formal review process for inmate complaints” foreclosed the availability of a *Bivens* remedy). Second, Congress has provided an alternative remedy through the Federal Tort Claims Act (“FTCA”). *See Schwarz v. Meinberg*, 761 F. App’x 732, 734-35 (9th Cir. 2019) (identifying the FTCA as an alternative process available to federal prisoners); *Prescott*, 2022 WL 18859316, at \*2 (“[A]ggrieved federal prisoners can bring suit for damages against the United States for the torts of its federal employees under the [FTCA].”); *Donaldson*, 2022 WL 10189084, at \*3 (“[P]laintiff has alternative remedies available to him, including the Bureau of Prisons administrative grievance process and a federal tort claims action.”). While a single alternative remedy is sufficient to foreclose a *Bivens* remedy, at least two are available to Watanabe. Thus, the Court cannot “second-guess” the judgments made by Congress and the Executive “by superimposing a *Bivens* remedy.” *Egbert*, 142 S. Ct. at 1807.

As the Supreme Court has stated, “in all but the most unusual circumstances, prescribing a cause of action is a job for Congress, not the courts.” *Egbert*, 142 S. Ct. at 1800. This case does not present the unusual circumstances required to recognize a *Bivens* remedy.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

Because Watanabe's claim arises in a new context and at least one special factor weighs against recognizing a new *Bivens* remedy, Defendants' Motion, ECF No. 20, is GRANTED for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. Because amendment would be futile, Watanabe's claim against Nielsen in the FAC is DISMISSED without leave to amend. *See, e.g., Cervantes v. Country-wide Home Loans, Inc.*, 656 F.3d 1034, 1041 (9th Cir. 2011) (explaining that dismissal without leave to amend is proper when amendment would be futile). The Clerk of Court is DIRECTED to close the case and enter judgment in favor of Defendants.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: Honolulu, Hawai'i, March 10, 2023.

[signature]  
Jill A. Otake  
United States District Judge

**APPENDIX C**  
**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
**FOR THE DISTRICT OF HAWAII**

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KEKAI WATANABE, #94102-022,

Plaintiff,

v.

ESTELA DERR, ET AL.,

Defendants.

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CIVIL No. 22-00168 JAO-RT

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**ORDER DISMISSING COMPLAINT IN PART WITH  
PARTIAL LEAVE GRANTED TO AMEND**

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Before the Court is a Prisoner Civil Rights Complaint (“Complaint”), ECF No. 1, filed by pro se Plaintiff Kekai Watanabe (“Watanabe”) pursuant to *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971).<sup>1</sup> Watanabe alleges that four officials<sup>2</sup> at the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu, Hawai‘i (“FDC Honolulu”) violated the Eighth Amendment by threatening his safety and denying him adequate medical

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<sup>1</sup> On May 19, 2021, Watanabe pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of ammunition in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2). *See United States v. Watanabe*, Cr. No. 21-00066 HG (D. Haw.), ECF Nos. 25, 29. Watanabe is currently scheduled to be sentenced on October 6, 2022. *See id.*, ECF No. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Watanabe names as Defendants Warden Estela Derr (“Warden Derr”), Unit Manager K. Robl (“Robl”), Staff Nurse Nielsen (“Nielsen”), and Chief Physician Dr. Kwon (“Dr. Kwon”) in their individual and official capacities. ECF No. 1 at 1-3.

care. ECF No. 1 at 6-8. After screening the Complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(b), the Court concludes that Watanabe states a plausible denial of adequate medical care claim against Nurse Nielsen in his individual capacity. Watanabe's remaining claims are DISMISSED with partial leave granted to amend.

### **I. STATUTORY SCREENING**

The Court is required to screen all in forma pauperis prisoner pleadings against government officials pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(a). *See Byrd v. Phx. Police Dep't*, 885 F.3d 639, 641 (9th Cir. 2018). Claims or complaints that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim for relief, or seek damages from defendants who are immune from suit must be dismissed. *See Lopez v. Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126-27 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc); *Rhodes v. Robinson*, 621 F.3d 1002, 1004 (9th Cir. 2010).

Screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(a) involves the same standard of review as that used under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). *See Rosati v. Igbinoso*, 791 F.3d 1037, 1039 (9th Cir. 2015) (per curiam). Under this standard, a complaint must "contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). A claim is "plausible" when the facts alleged support a reasonable inference that the plaintiff is entitled to relief from a specific defendant for specific misconduct. *See id.*

In conducting this screening, the Court liberally construes pro se litigants' pleadings and resolves all doubts in their favor. *See Hebbe v. Pliler*, 627 F.3d 338, 342 (9th Cir. 2010) (citations omitted). The Court must grant leave to amend if it appears the plaintiff can correct the defects in the complaint. *See Lopez*, 203 F.3d at 1130. When a claim cannot be saved by amendment, dismissal with prejudice

is appropriate. *See Sylvia Landfield Tr. v. City of Los Angeles*, 729 F.3d 1189, 1196 (9th Cir. 2013).

## **II. BACKGROUND<sup>3</sup>**

Watanabe commenced this action by signing the Complaint on March 31, 2022. ECF No. 1 at 10. Watanabe alleges in Count I that the Bureau of Prisons (“BOP”) and Robl, a unit manager at FDC Honolulu, were aware of Watanabe’s “history of gang (Uso) affiliation.” *Id.* at 6. Watanabe has been housed at FDC Honolulu in “unit 5A” alongside members of several “rival gangs” including “Murder Inc,” “La Familia,” “Paisa’s,” “Tango’s,” “MS-13,” “Northeno,” and “Soreno’s.” *Id.*

On July 12, 2021, Watanabe was sitting at a table in unit 5A when four members of the Paisa’s gang attacked him. *Id.* at 7. The disturbance grew to include more than 35 individuals. *Id.* Watanabe was “severely beaten” during the disturbance by the four gang members who initially attacked him and “other Latino gang members.” *Id.* At one point, Watanabe was beaten by someone wielding a “lock in a sock.” *Id.*

After order was restored in unit 5A, Watanabe along with approximately 20 other inmates were moved to the special housing unit (“SHU”). *Id.* Watanabe’s injuries were “documented,” and he was told “that he would be put on ‘Sick Call.’” *Id.* At 8 p.m. on the day of the disturbance, Watanabe asked correctional officers Noni and Woodson (who are not named as defendants) to be seen by medical staff because he was experiencing “severe pain and headaches.” *Id.* Watanabe described his symptoms to Nurse Nielsen, and Nielsen responded by telling Watanabe “to

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<sup>3</sup> At screening, Watanabe’s well-pleaded factual allegations are accepted as true. *See, e.g., Nordstrom v. Ryan*, 762 F.3d 903, 908 (9th Cir. 2014).

stop being a cry baby.’’ *Id.* Nielsen denied Watanabe’s request to be taken to the hospital. *Id.*

Watanabe remained in the SHU for more than two months. *Id.* During this time, Watanabe “submitted multiple sick call and ‘COP OUT’ requests for medical attention.” *Id.* According to Watanabe, he was given “over the counter pain medication” but “no actual treatment.” *Id.* Watanabe was later diagnosed with a “fractured [coccyx] with bone chips in soft tissue around his tailbone.” *Id.* These injuries caused Watanabe “severe pain.” *Id.* Upon his release from the SHU, Watanabe returned to unit 5A along with the other inmates involved in the July 12, 2021 disturbance. *Id.*

Watanabe alleges in Count II that Dr. Kwon had an “opportunity to properly diagnose [his] injuries” between July 2021 and January 2022, but he failed to do so. *Id.* at 8. During this period, “Health Services ignored multiple request[s] for treatment.” *Id.* When Health Services identified Watanabe’s fractured coccyx in February 2022, Watanabe was sent to see a specialist. *Id.*

Watanabe seeks three million dollars and “an Order against [Defendant] Derr to follow United States law regarding the housing of federal inmates based on gang affiliation and determined security levels.” *Id.* at 10.

### **III. DISCUSSION**

#### **A. Legal Framework For *Bivens* Claims**

In *Bivens*, the Supreme Court “recognized for the first time an implied right of action for damages against federal officers alleged to have violated a citizen’s constitutional rights.” *Hernandez v. Mesa*, 582 U.S. \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. 2003, 2006 (2017) (per curiam) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). *Bivens* involved a suit against individual federal agents who violated the Fourth Amendment’s prohibition against unreasonable searches and seizures. *See*

*Bivens*, 403 U.S. at 389-90. Since *Bivens*, the Supreme Court has expanded this implied cause of action only twice. *See Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 582 U.S. \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. 1843, 1855 (2017) (“These three cases—*Bivens*, *Davis*, and *Carlson*—represent the only instances in which the Court has approved of an implied damages remedy under the Constitution itself.”); *Davis v. Passman*, 442 U.S. 228 (1979) (suit under the Fifth Amendment’s Due Process Clause for gender discrimination by a United States Congressman); *Carlson v. Green*, 446 U.S. 14 (1980) (suit under the Eighth Amendment’s Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clause for failure to provide adequate medical treatment by federal prison officials).

The Supreme Court “has made clear that expanding the *Bivens* remedy is now a ‘disfavored’ judicial activity.” *Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 1857 (quoting *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 675). “This is in accord with the Court’s observation that it has ‘consistently refused to extend *Bivens* to any new context or new category of defendants.’”<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

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<sup>4</sup> The Supreme Court declined to create a *Bivens* remedy in the following cases: a First Amendment suit against a federal employer, *see Bush v. Lucas*, 462 U.S. 367 (1983); a race discrimination suit against military officers, *see Chappell v. Wallace*, 462 U.S. 296 (1983); a substantive due process suit against military officers, *see United States v. Stanley*, 483 U.S. 669 (1987); a procedural due process suit against Social Security officials, *see Schweiker v. Chilicky*, 487 U.S. 412 (1988); a procedural due process suit against a federal agency for wrongful termination, *see FDIC v. Meyer*, 510 U.S. 471 (1994); an Eighth Amendment suit against a private halfway house operator under contract with the BOP, *see Corr. Servs. Corp. v. Malesko*, 534 U.S. 61 (2001); a claim of retaliation by Bureau of Land Management officials against plaintiff for his exercise of Fifth Amendment property rights, *see Wilkie v. Robbins*, 551 U.S. 537 (2007); an Eighth Amendment suit against prison guards at a private prison, *see Minneci v. Pollard*, 565 U.S. 118 (2012); and a Fifth Amendment suit against Department of Justice officials, *see Abbasi*, 582 U.S. \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. 1843.

(quoting *Malesko*, 534 U.S. at 68). Indeed, the Court has suggested that “the analysis in [its] three *Bivens* cases might have been different if they were decided today.” *Id.* at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 1856.

In deciding whether a *Bivens* remedy is available, courts first consider whether providing such a remedy is precluded by prior cases in which the Supreme Court or the Ninth Circuit has declined to recognize an implied right of action. *See Lanuza v. Love*, 899 F.3d 1019, 1025 (9th Cir. 2018). If a claim is precluded, that is the end of the matter. If a claim is not precluded, courts then apply a two-step test.

At step one, courts determine whether a plaintiff is seeking a *Bivens* remedy in a new context. *See Ioane v. Hodges*, 939 F.3d 945, 951 (9th Cir. 2018). The context is new “[i]f the case is different in a meaningful way from previous *Bivens* cases decided by [the Supreme Court].” *Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 1859. If the plaintiff is seeking a *Bivens* remedy in a new context, then courts proceed to the second step.

At step two, courts may extend *Bivens* only if two conditions are met. “First, the plaintiff must not have any other adequate alternative remedy.” *Ioane*, 939 F.3d at 951 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). “Second, there cannot be any ‘special factors’ that lead the court to believe that Congress, instead of the courts, should be the one to authorize a suit for money damages.” *Id.* at 951-52 (some internal quotation marks, brackets, and citation omitted). Although the Supreme Court has yet to define the term, “special factors,” it has explained that “the inquiry must concentrate on whether the Judiciary is well suited, absent congressional action or instruction, to consider and weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.” *Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 1857-58.

**B. Official Capacity Claims Under *Bivens***

Watanabe names the Defendants in both their individual and official capacities. *See* ECF No. 1 at 1-3.

“A *Bivens* action can be maintained against a defendant in his or her individual capacity only, and not in his or her official capacity.” *Consejo de Desarrollo Economico de Mexicali, A.C. v. United States*, 482 F.3d 1157, 1173 (9th Cir. 2007) (internal quotation marks, brackets, and citation omitted). “This is because a *Bivens* suit against a defendant in his or her official capacity would merely be another way of pleading an action against the United States, which would be barred by the doctrine of sovereign immunity.” *Id.* (citation omitted). Thus, “[t]here is no such animal as a *Bivens* suit against a public official tortfeasor in his or her official capacity.” *Solida v. McKelvey*, 820 F.3d 1090, 1094 (9th Cir. 2016) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

Any *Bivens* claims against Defendants in their official capacities are therefore DISMISSED with prejudice.

**C. Supervisory Liability**

Watanabe names as Defendants three supervisory officials at FDC Honolulu — that is, the warden, a unit manager, and the chief physician. ECF No. 1 at 1-3.

“In the limited settings where *Bivens* does apply, . . . Government officials may not be held liable for the unconstitutional conduct of their subordinates under a theory of *respondeat superior*.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 676 (citations omitted). This is because “[t]he purpose of *Bivens* is to deter the officer.” *Abbsi*, 582 U.S. at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 1860 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). “*Bivens* is not designed to hold officers responsible for acts of their subordinates.” *Id.* (citation omitted).

A *Bivens* claim must be “brought against the individual official for his or her own acts, not the acts of others.” *Id.*; *see also Jones v. McFadden*, No. 1:09-cv-00957-DLB (PC), 2010 WL 2196849, at \*3 (E.D. Cal. May 28, 2010) (“[W]hen a named defendant holds a supervisorial position, the causal link between him and the claimed constitutional violation must be specifically alleged.” (citations omitted)). Thus, to state a claim for relief under *Bivens* based on a theory of supervisory liability, the plaintiff must allege facts showing that supervisory defendants:

- (1) personally participated in the alleged deprivation of constitutional rights; (2) knew of the violations and failed to act to prevent them; or (3) promulgated or implemented a policy so deficient that the policy itself is a repudiation of constitutional rights and is the moving force of the constitutional violation.

*Id.* (quoting *Hansen v. Black*, 885 F.2d 642, 646 (9th Cir. 1989)) (internal quotation marks and other citation omitted).

Any claims against Warden Derr, Robl, Dr. Kwon solely based on their supervisory positions are DISMISSED with prejudice. *See Fries v. Kerman*, Case No. 1:18-cv-00652-LJO-SKO (PC), 2018 WL 11260954, at \*8 (E.D. Cal. Dec. 5, 2018) (“[A]ny allegation that supervisory personnel . . . somehow liable solely based on the acts of those under his or her supervision, does not state a cognizable claim.”). For a claim against Warden Derr, Robl, or Dr. Kwon to proceed, Watanabe must plausibly allege that each one of them violated his rights through their own actions. *See Chavez v. United States*, 683 F.3d 1102, 1109 (9th Cir. 2012) (“*Bivens* claims cannot proceed on a theory of *respondeat superior*, but must instead plead that a supervisor, by her ‘own individual actions,’ violated the Constitution.” (citation omitted)).

#### **D. Eighth Amendment**

The Eighth Amendment governs the treatment of convicted prisoners and forbids “cruel and unusual punishments.” U.S. Const. amend. VIII; *see Sandoval v. County of San Diego*, 985 F.3d 657, 667 (9th Cir. 2021). Although the Constitution “does not mandate comfortable prisons,” it does not “permit inhumane ones.” *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 832 (1994) (citations omitted). Prison officials, therefore, may not use excessive physical force against prisoners, they “must ensure that inmates receive adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical care, and [they] must ‘take reasonable measures to guarantee the safety of the inmates.’” *Id.* (citations omitted).

##### **1. Failure To Protect**

Watanabe alleges in Count I that FDC Honolulu officials have failed to protect him from harm by members of “rival gangs.” ECF No. 1 at 6.

The Supreme Court has not explicitly held that a *Bivens* remedy is available under the Eighth Amendment for a threat to safety claim. The Ninth Circuit, however, has allowed a *Bivens* claim under the Eighth Amendment for a federal prison official’s deliberate indifference to prisoner safety. *See Doreh v. Rodriguez*, 723 F. App’x 530, 530 (9th Cir. 2018) (“[T]hese allegations are sufficient to state a deliberate indifference to safety claim.” (citation omitted)). Several district courts have also recognized failure to protect claims under *Bivens*. *See McDaniels v. United States*, No. 5:14-cv-02594-VBF-JDE, 2018 WL 7501292, at \*5-6 (C.D. Cal. Dec. 28, 2018), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2019 WL 1045132 (C.D. Cal. Mar. 5, 2019); *Lee v. Matevousian*, No. 1:18-cv-00169-GSA-PC, 2018 WL 5603593, at \*7-8 (E.D. Cal. Oct. 26, 2018) (concluding that a failure to protect claim was not a *Bivens* expansion);

*Marquez v. United States*, Case No.: 3:18-cv-0434-CAB-NLS, 2018 WL 1942418, at \*4 (S.D. Cal. Apr. 25, 2018).

Even assuming the existence of a *Bivens* remedy, Murphy fails to state a plausible claim. *See Hernandez*, 582 U.S. at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 2007 (“[D]isposing of a *Bivens* claim by resolving the constitutional question, while assuming the existence of a *Bivens* remedy—is appropriate in many cases.”); *Ansari v. Martinez*, 859 F. App’x 842, 842 (9th Cir. 2021) (“The district court properly dismissed [the plaintiff’s] Eighth Amendment claims because, even if a *Bivens* remedy is available for these claims, [the plaintiff] failed to allege facts sufficient to state a plausible claim.” (citations omitted)).

The Eighth Amendment imposes on prison officials a duty to “take reasonable measures to guarantee the safety of the inmates.” *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 832 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). Prison officials, therefore, “have a duty to protect prisoners from violence at the hands of other prisoners.” *Id.* at 833 (internal quotation marks, alteration, and citation omitted).

A prison official violates the Eighth Amendment, however, only when two requirements are met. “First, the deprivation alleged must be objectively, sufficiently serious.” *Id.* at 834 (citations omitted). “For a claim . . . based on a failure to prevent harm, the inmate must show that he is incarcerated under conditions posing a substantial risk of serious harm.” *Id.* (citation and footnote omitted). Second, the plaintiff must show deliberate indifference—that is, that “the [prison] official kn[ew] of and disregard[ed] an excessive risk to inmate . . . safety.” *Id.* at 837. “[T]he official must both be aware of facts from which the inference could be drawn that a substantial risk of serious harm exists, and he must also draw the inference.” *Id.*

**a. Prior To The July 12, 2021 Disturbance**

Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that he faced a substantial risk of serious harm prior to July 12, 2021. Although prison officials housed “rival gangs” together in unit 5A, Watanabe does not allege that there was a credible threat of rival gang violence prior to July 12. For example, Watanabe does not allege that his gang—that is, Uso—had previous issues with the Paisa’s, nor does Watanabe allege that he was specifically targeted for harm by Paisa’s members because of his “history of gang . . . affiliation.” ECF No. 1 at 6. Indeed, it is unclear if the four attackers were motivated by Watanabe’s gang membership or something else.

To the extent Watanabe is suggesting that housing different gangs together necessarily amounts to an Eighth Amendment violation, he is mistaken. *See Labatad v. Corr. Corp. of Am.*, 714 F.3d 1155, 1160 (9th Cir. 2013) (“[A]mong other problems, ‘the number of gang members housed and the high representation of certain gangs would place an unmanageable burden on prison administrators were they required to separate inmates by gangs.’” (quoting *Mayoral v. Sheahan*, 245 F.3d 934, 939 (7th Cir. 2001) (alterations omitted)); *Wilson v. Pierce County*, Case No. 16-5455 RJB, 2017 WL 3876625 (W.D. Wash. Sept. 5, 2017) (“The Ninth Circuit has held that a jail’s policy of housing rival gang members together does not amount to a per se violation of the Eighth Amendment.” (citing *Labatad*, 714 F.3d at 1160)).

Moreover, Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that any Defendant acted with deliberate indifference to his safety prior to July 12, 2021. Watanabe does not say how any prison official knew of a substantial risk of gang violence and disregarded that risk. Watanabe does not allege that he complained to any prison official about his placement in unit 5A prior to July 12, nor does he allege that any inmate

voiced concern about gang-on-gang violence prior to the July 12 disturbance. Even if prison officials knew both of Watanabe's historical affiliation with the Uso gang and that rival gangs were being housed together in unit 5A, that is not enough. *See Murphy v. Shelby*, No. C 07-02299 JF (PR), 2009 WL 773499, at \*4 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 23, 2009) ("Even assuming that Defendants knew that Plaintiff and [another inmate] were members of rival gangs, this information alone is not sufficient to raise the inference that putting them in the same cell would create a substantial risk of serious harm[.]")

**b. After The July 12, 2021 Disturbance**

Watanabe alleges that he remained in the SHU for more than two months after the July 12, 2021 disturbance. ECF No. 1 at 7. Prison officials then returned Watanabe to unit 5A. *Id.*

Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that he currently faces a substantial risk of serious harm in unit 5A. Watanabe does not allege that the four men who attacked him on July 12 or anyone else has harmed him since he returned to unit 5A. Nor does he allege that anyone has attempted or even threatened to harm him.

Watanabe notes that two inmates in his unit — one a member of a "Northeno gang" and the other a member of a "Hawaiian gang"—got into a fight on March 24, 2022. *Id.* This single incident between two inmates, however, falls short of showing a substantial risk of serious harm to Watanabe. *See Hudson v. Palmer*, 468 U.S. 517, 526 (1984) ("Prisons, by definition, are places of involuntary confinement of persons who have a demonstrated proclivity for antisocial criminal, and often violent, conduct."). Indeed, nothing suggests that these two inmates got into a fight because of their respective gang associations.

In addition, Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that a prison official is acting with deliberate indifference to his safety. Watanabe does not allege that he has complained to prison officials about his safety in unit 5A. Thus, Watanabe has not alleged that a prison official knows of the danger he is purportedly facing. *See M.G. v. United States*, 603 F. App'x 616, 617 (9th Cir. 2015) (“To plead deliberate indifference, [the plaintiff] must allege nonconclusory facts from which we can infer defendants . . . actually knew of the danger [the plaintiff] faced.” (citations omitted)).

Watanabe’s failure to protect claim is therefore DISMISSED with leave granted to amend.

## 2. Denial Of Adequate Medical Care

Watanabe alleges in Count II that he was denied adequate medical care following the July 12, 2021 disturbance. ECF No. 1 at 8.

As already noted, “*Carlson* recognized an implied claim under the Eighth Amendment’s cruel and unusual punishment clause for prison officials’ failure to provide adequate medical care.” *Hoffman v. Preston*, 26 F.4th 1059, 1064 (9th Cir. 2022) (citation omitted). “To establish a claim of inadequate medical care, a prisoner must first show a ‘serious medical need’ by demonstrating that failure to treat a prisoner’s condition could result in further significant injury or the unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain.” *Edmo v. Corizon, Inc.*, 935 F.3d 757, 785 (9th Cir. 2019) (per curiam) (some internal quotation marks and citation omitted). “If . . . a prisoner establishes a sufficiently serious medical need, that prisoner must then show the official’s response to the need was deliberately indifferent.” *Id.* at 786 (internal quotation marks, brackets, and citation omitted). “To show deliberate indifference, the plaintiff must show that the course of treatment the official chose was medically unacceptable under the circumstances and that the

official chose this course in conscious disregard of an excessive risk to the plaintiff’s health.” *Id.* (internal quotation marks, brackets, and citation omitted). “Deliberate indifference is a ‘high legal standard’ beyond malpractice or gross negligence.” *Balla v. Idaho*, 29 F.4th 1019, 1025-26 (9th Cir. 2022) (citation omitted).

**a. Nurse Nielsen**

Watanabe alleges that he was “severely beaten” by four members of the Paisa’s gang and “other Latino gang members” on July 12, 2021. ECF No. 1 at 7. During the attack, someone beat Watanabe with a “lock in a sock.” *Id.* Later that evening, Watanabe was suffering from “severe pain and headaches,” and he asked to be seen by medical staff. *Id.* Watanabe “discussed his medical condition” with Nurse Nielsen and “begg[ed] for medical assistance,” but Nielsen told him “to stop being a cry baby.” *Id.* at 7-8. Nielsen also refused to send Watanabe to the hospital. *Id.* at 7.

Months later, Watanabe was diagnosed with a fractured coccyx and “bone chips in soft tissue around his tailbone.” *Id.* These injuries caused Watanabe “severe pain.” *Id.* Construed liberally, Watanabe’s allegations plausibly state a denial of adequate medical care claim against Nielsen in his individual capacity that may proceed.

**b. Other Prison Officials**

Watanabe also alleges that he submitted “multiple sick call and ‘COP OUT’ requests for medical attention” during the over two months that he spent in the SHU. *Id.* Watanabe, however, fails to say what he said in these requests, to whom he submitted them, and what he was told in response. To the extent Watanabe alleges that Dr. Kwon “had an opportunity to properly diagnose [his] injuries, but failed to do so,” *id.* at 8, Watanabe fails to say what interactions, if any, he had with Dr. Kwon. Moreover, although Watanabe alleges that he “received no actual treatment,”

*id.* at 7, he acknowledges that he was given over-the-counter pain medication and that he was sent to a specialist once his fractured coccyx was diagnosed, *id.* at 7-8. Thus, Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that any other prison official consciously disregarded a serious medical need. Watanabe's denial of adequate medical care claims against any Defendant other than Nielsen are therefore DISMISSED with leave granted to amend.

#### **E. Injunctive Relief Under *Bivens***

In his request for relief, Watanabe seeks three million dollars and "an Order against [Warden] Derr to follow United States law regarding the housing of federal inmates based on gang affiliation and determined security levels." *Id.* at 10.

"*Bivens* does not encompass injunctive and declaratory relief[.]" *Solida*, 820 F.3d at 1093; *see Higazy v. Templeton*, 505 F.3d 161 (2d Cir. 2007) ("The only remedy available in a *Bivens* action is an award for monetary damages from defendants in their individual capacities." (citation omitted)); *Bacon v. Core Civic*, Case No.: 2:20-cv-00914-JAD-VCF, 2020 WL 3100827, at \*6 (D. Nev. June 10, 2020) ("[I]njunctive relief may not be obtained through *Bivens* actions, which are limited to claims for monetary damages against persons in their individual capacities." (footnote omitted)). Thus, to the extent Watanabe seeks injunctive relief in this action, such relief is not available under *Bivens*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "[A] prisoner may bring a non-*Bivens* action for injunctive relief to stop Eighth Amendment violations based on conditions of confinement." *Pinson v. Othon*, No. CV-20-00169-TUC-RM, 2020 WL 6273410, at \*5 (D. Ariz. Oct. 26, 2020) (citation omitted). To bring such a claim, a prisoner must:

(1) invoke jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331, (2) allege facts to state a colorable ongoing Eighth Amendment claim, (3) name as a defendant the person who would be responsible for

**IV. CONCLUSION**

(1) Watanabe's claims against Defendants in their official capacities and against Warden Derr, Robl, and Dr. Kwon solely based on their supervisory positions are DISMISSED with prejudice.

(2) Watanabe's request for injunctive relief under *Bivens* is DENIED.

(3) Watanabe states a denial of adequate medical care claim in Count II against Nielsen in his individual capacity that may proceed.

(4) Watanabe's threat to safety claim in Count I and his other denial of adequate medical care claims in Count II are DISMISSED with leave granted to amend. Watanabe may file an amended pleading that attempts to cure the noted deficiencies in these claims, if possible, on or before June 20, 2022.

(5) If he chooses to file an amended pleading, Watanabe must comply with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the Local Rules for the District of Hawaii, particularly LR10.4, which require an amended complaint to be complete itself, without reference to any prior pleading. An amended complaint must be short and plain, comply with Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, and be

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carrying out any order for injunctive relief, and (4) request particular injunctive relief that is specifically targeted to resolving the ongoing Eighth Amendment violation.

*Id.*; see also *Carballo v. Barr*, 491 F. Supp. 3d 860, 867 (D. Nev. 2020) (“[A] plaintiff may sue a federal officer in his or her official capacity, invoking jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and the court’s inherent equitable powers, and seek injunctive relief to remedy alleged constitutional violations.”). For the reasons set forth above, however, Watanabe fails to state a colorable failure to protect claim, and Watanabe acknowledges that he is now receiving medical care for his fractured coccyx.

submitted on the court's prisoner civil rights form. An amended complaint will supersede the preceding complaint. Claims not realleged in an amended complaint may be deemed voluntarily dismissed.

(6) IN THE ALTERNATIVE, Watanabe may notify the Court in writing on or before June 20, 2022 that he elects to proceed with his denial of adequate medical care claim in Count II against Nielsen, and this claim shall be served. Proceeding on his claim against Nielsen in Count II does not preclude Watanabe from later filing an amended pleading that cures the deficiencies in those claims dismissed with leave granted to amend, subject to the requirements of Fed. R. Civ. P. 15 and any applicable orders of this Court. If Watanabe fails to file either an amended pleading or a notice of election, the Court will direct that the Complaint be served as limited by this Order.

(7) The Clerk is DIRECTED to send Watanabe a prisoner civil rights complaint form so that he may comply with the directions of this Order if he elects to file an amended pleading rather than immediately stand on his denial of adequate medical care claim in Count II against Nielsen.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: Honolulu, Hawai'i, May 19, 2022.

[signature]  
Jill A. Otake  
United States District Judge

**APPENDIX D**  
**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
**FOR THE DISTRICT OF HAWAII**

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KEKAI WATANABE, #94102-022,

Plaintiff,

v.

ESTELA DERR, ET AL.,

Defendants.

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CIVIL No. 22-00168 JAO-RT

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**ORDER DISMISSING FIRST AMENDED  
COMPLAINT IN PART AND DIRECTING SERVICE**

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Before the Court is a First Amended Prisoner Civil Rights Complaint (“FAC”), ECF No. 8, filed by pro se Plaintiff Kekai Watanabe (“Watanabe” or “Plaintiff”) pursuant to *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971).<sup>1</sup> Watanabe alleges that four officials<sup>2</sup> at FDC Honolulu violated the

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<sup>1</sup> On May 19, 2021, Watanabe pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of ammunition in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2). *See United States v. Watanabe*, Cr. No. 21-00066 HG (D. Haw.), ECF Nos. 25, 29. Watanabe is currently scheduled to be sentenced on October 6, 2022. *See id.*, ECF No. 36. Watanabe is presently in custody at the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu, Hawai‘i (“FDC Honolulu”). *See* Federal Bureau of Prisons, <https://www.bop.gov/inmateloc/> (select “Find By Number”; enter “94102-022” in “Number” field; and select “Search”) (last visited August 2, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Watanabe names as Defendants Warden Estela Derr (“Warden Derr”), Unit Manager K. Robl (“Robl”), Staff Nurse Francis Nielsen

Eighth Amendment by threatening his safety and denying him adequate medical care. ECF No. 8 at 6-9. After screening the FAC pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(b), the Court again concludes that Watanabe states a plausible denial of adequate medical care claim against Nurse Nielsen in his individual capacity. That claim shall be served and requires a response. Watanabe's remaining claims are DISMISSED without prejudice.

### **I. STATUTORY SCREENING**

The Court is required to screen all in forma pauperis prisoner pleadings against government officials pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(a). *See Byrd v. Phx. Police Dep't*, 885 F.3d 639, 641 (9th Cir. 2018). Claims or complaints that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim for relief, or seek damages from defendants who are immune from suit must be dismissed. *See Lopez v. Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126-27 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc); *Rhodes v. Robinson*, 621 F.3d 1002, 1004 (9th Cir. 2010).

Screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(a) involves the same standard of review as that used under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). *See Rosati v. Igbinoso*, 791 F.3d 1037, 1039 (9th Cir. 2015) (per curiam). Under this standard, a complaint must "contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). A claim is "plausible" when the facts alleged support a reasonable inference that the plaintiff is entitled to relief from a specific defendant for specific misconduct. *See id.*

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(“Nielsen”), and Chief Doctor Nathan Kwon (“Dr. Kwon”) in their individual capacities. ECF No. 8 at 1-3.

In conducting this screening, the Court liberally construes pro se litigants' pleadings and resolves all doubts in their favor. *See Hebbe v. Pliler*, 627 F.3d 338, 342 (9th Cir. 2010) (citations omitted). The Court must grant leave to amend if it appears the plaintiff can correct the defects in the complaint. *See Lopez*, 203 F.3d at 1130. When a claim cannot be saved by amendment, dismissal with prejudice is appropriate. *See Sylvia Landfield Tr. v. City of Los Angeles*, 729 F.3d 1189, 1196 (9th Cir. 2013).

## II. BACKGROUND<sup>3</sup>

In 2021, Watanabe was housed in "unit 5A" at FDC Honolulu with members of various gangs including "Uso," "Murder Inc," "La Familia," "Paisa's," "Tango's," "MS-13," "Northeno," and "Soreno's." ECF No. 8 at 6-7. Unit 5A's inmate population also included "deportable aliens, pre-sentence inmates, pre-trial inmates, high security inmates through minimum security inmates[,] and inmates that have pending orders for civil commitment due to psychiatric issues." *Id.* at 6. Watanabe has a "history of gang (Uso) affiliation," and Robl and other "staff at FDC Honolulu" were aware of this affiliation. *Id.*

On July 12, 2021, Watanabe was sitting at a table in unit 5A when four members of the Paisa's gang attacked him. *Id.* at 7. The disturbance eventually included more than 35 "combatants." *Id.* Watanabe was "severely beaten" during the disturbance by the four gang members who initially attacked him and also "other Latino gang members." *Id.* At one point, Watanabe was beaten by someone wielding a "lock in a sock." *Id.*

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<sup>3</sup> At screening, Watanabe's well-pleaded factual allegations are accepted as true. *See, e.g., Nordstrom v. Ryan*, 762 F.3d 903, 908 (9th Cir. 2014).

After order was restored in unit 5A, approximately 20 inmates including Watanabe were moved to the special housing unit (“SHU”). *Id.* Watanabe’s injuries were “documented,” and he was told “that he would be put on ‘Sick Call.’” *Id.* At 8 p.m. on the day of the disturbance, Watanabe asked correctional officers Noni and Woodson (who are not named as defendants) to be seen by medical staff because he was experiencing “severe pain and headaches.” *Id.* Watanabe described his symptoms to Nurse Nielsen, and Nielsen responded by telling Watanabe ““to stop being a cry baby.”” *Id.* Nielsen denied Watanabe’s request to be taken to the hospital. *Id.*

Watanabe remained in the SHU for more than two months. *Id.* During this time, Watanabe “submitted multiple sick call and ‘COP OUT’ requests for medical attention.” *Id.* According to Watanabe, he was given “over the counter pain medication” but “no actual treatment.” *Id.* Watanabe was later diagnosed with a “fractured [coccyx] with bone chips in soft tissue around his tailbone.” *Id.* These injuries caused Watanabe “severe pain.” *Id.* Upon his release from the SHU, Watanabe returned to unit 5A along with the other inmates involved in the July 12, 2021 disturbance. *Id.*

Watanabe alleges Dr. Kwon had an “opportunity to properly diagnose [his] injuries” between July 2021 and January 2022, but he failed to do so. *Id.* at 9. During this period, “Health Services ignored multiple request[s] for treatment.” *Id.* When Health Services identified Watanabe’s fractured coccyx in February 2022, it agreed to send Watanabe to a specialist. *Id.* According to Watanabe, he had submitted to Dr. Kwon “11 emails and COP OUTS” seeking medical attention. *Id.* at 8.

Watanabe commenced this action by signing the original Complaint on March 31, 2022. ECF No. 1 at 10. In the original Complaint, Watanabe alleged that Warden Derr,

Robl, Nielsen, and Dr. Kwon violated the Eighth Amendment by threatening his safety and denying him adequate medical care. *Id.* at 6-8.

On May 19, 2022, the Court issued an Order Dismissing Complaint in Part with Partial Leave Granted to Amend. ECF No. 5. The Court concluded, in relevant part, that Watanabe failed to allege a plausible failure to protect claim based on events either before or after the July 12, 2021 disturbance. *Id.* at 11-16. The Court further concluded that Watanabe stated a plausible denial of medical care claim against Nielsen but no other Defendant. *Id.* at 16-18. The Court gave Watanabe the choice of proceeding with his claim against Nielsen or filing an amended pleading that cured the deficiencies in his other claims. *Id.* at 20-21.

The Court received the FAC on July 7, 2022. ECF No. 8. In the FAC, Watanabe maintains that Warden Derr, Robl, Nielsen, and Dr. Kwon violated the Eighth Amendment by threatening his safety and denying him adequate medical care. *Id.* at 6-9. Watanabe seeks “\$3,000,000 for pain and suffering at the hands of the Defendants.” *Id.* at 11.

### **III. DISCUSSION**

#### **A. Legal Framework For *Bivens* Claims**

In *Bivens*, the Supreme Court “recognized for the first time an implied right of action for damages against federal officers alleged to have violated a citizen’s constitutional rights.” *Hernandez v. Mesa*, 582 U.S. \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. 2003, 2006 (2017) (per curiam) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). *Bivens* involved a suit against individual federal agents who violated the Fourth Amendment’s prohibition against unreasonable searches and seizures. *See Bivens*, 403 U.S. at 389-90. Since *Bivens*, the Supreme Court has expanded this implied cause of action only twice. *See Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 582 U.S. \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. 1843, 1855 (2017) (“These three cases—*Bivens*, *Davis*, and *Carlson*—

represent the only instances in which the Court has approved of an implied damages remedy under the Constitution itself.”); *Davis v. Passman*, 442 U.S. 228 (1979) (suit under the Fifth Amendment’s Due Process Clause for gender discrimination by a United States Congressman); *Carlson v. Green*, 446 U.S. 14 (1980) (suit under the Eighth Amendment’s Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clause for failure to provide adequate medical treatment by federal prison officials).

The Supreme Court “has made clear that expanding the *Bivens* remedy is now a ‘disfavored’ judicial activity.” *Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 1857 (quoting *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 675). “This is in accord with the Court’s observation that it has ‘consistently refused to extend *Bivens* to any new context or new category of defendants.’”<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

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<sup>4</sup> The Supreme Court declined to create a *Bivens* remedy in the following cases: a First Amendment suit against a federal employer, *see Bush v. Lucas*, 462 U.S. 367 (1983); a race discrimination suit against military officers, *see Chappell v. Wallace*, 462 U.S. 296 (1983); a substantive due process suit against military officers, *see United States v. Stanley*, 483 U.S. 669 (1987); a procedural due process suit against Social Security officials, *see Schweiker v. Chilicky*, 487 U.S. 412 (1988); a procedural due process suit against a federal agency for wrongful termination, *see FDIC v. Meyer*, 510 U.S. 471 (1994); an Eighth Amendment suit against a private halfway house operator under contract with the BOP, *see Corr. Servs. Corp. v. Malesko*, 534 U.S. 61 (2001); a claim of retaliation by Bureau of Land Management officials against plaintiff for his exercise of Fifth Amendment property rights, *see Wilkie v. Robbins*, 551 U.S. 537 (2007); a suit under the Fifth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments against United States Public Health Service personnel, *see Hui v. Castaneda*, 559 U.S. 799 (2010); an Eighth Amendment suit against prison guards at a private prison, *see Minneci v. Pollard*, 565 U.S. 118 (2012); a Fifth Amendment suit against Department of Justice officials, *see Abbasi*, 582 U.S. \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. 1843; a Fourth and Fifth Amendment suit against a United States Border Patrol agent, *see Hernandez v. Mesa*, 589 U.S. \_\_\_, 140 S. Ct. 739 (2020); and a First

(quoting *Malesko*, 534 U.S. at 68). Indeed, the Supreme Court has indicated that “if [the Court] were called to decide *Bivens* today, [it] would decline to discover any implied causes of action in the Constitution.” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. \_\_\_, 142 S. Ct. at 1809 (citation omitted).

In deciding whether a *Bivens* remedy is available, courts first consider whether providing such a remedy is precluded by prior cases in which the Supreme Court or the Ninth Circuit has declined to recognize an implied right of action. *See Lanuza v. Love*, 899 F.3d 1019, 1025 (9th Cir. 2018). If a claim is precluded, that is the end of the matter. If a claim is not precluded, courts then apply a two-step test.

At step one, courts determine whether a plaintiff is seeking a *Bivens* remedy in a new context. *See Ioane v. Hodges*, 939 F.3d 945, 951 (9th Cir. 2018). The context is new “[i]f the case is different in a meaningful way from previous *Bivens* cases decided by [the Supreme Court].” *Abbas*, 582 U.S. at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 1859. If the plaintiff is seeking a *Bivens* remedy in a new context, then courts proceed to the second step.

At step two, courts may extend *Bivens* only if two conditions are met. First, “a court may not fashion a *Bivens* remedy if Congress already has provided, or has authorized the Executive to provide, ‘an alternative remedial structure.’” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at \_\_\_, 142 S. Ct. at 1804 (citations omitted)). “So long as Congress or the Executive has created a remedial process that it finds sufficient to secure an adequate level of deterrence, the courts cannot second-guess that calibration by superimposing a *Bivens* remedy.” *Id.* at \_\_\_, 142 S. Ct. at 1807. “Second, if a claim arises in a new context, a *Bivens* remedy is unavailable if

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and Fourth Amendment suit against a United States Border Patrol Agent, *see Egbert v. Boule*, 596 U.S. \_\_\_, 142 S. Ct. 1793 (2022).

there are ‘special factors’ indicating that the Judiciary is at least arguably less equipped than Congress to ‘weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.’” *Id.* at \_\_\_, 142 S. Ct. at 1803 (citation omitted). “If there is even a single ‘reason to pause before applying *Bivens* in a new context,’ a court may not recognize a *Bivens* remedy.” *Id.* (citation omitted). Although the Supreme Court has yet to define “special factors,” it has explained that “the inquiry must concentrate on whether the Judiciary is well suited, absent congressional action or instruction, to consider and weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.” *Abbasi*, 582 U.S. at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 1857-58.

The Supreme Court has stated that this two-step test often resolves to a single question: “whether there is *any* rational reason (even one) to think that *Congress* is better suited to ‘weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.’” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at \_\_\_, 142 S. Ct. at 1805 (citation omitted). “Put another way, ‘the most important question is who should decide whether to provide for a damages remedy, Congress or the courts?’” *Id.* at \_\_\_, 142 S. Ct. at 1803 (citation omitted). “If there is a rational reason to think that the answer is ‘Congress’—as it will be in most every case, no *Bivens* action may lie.” *Id.* (citation omitted). Thus, “if there is any reason to think that ‘judicial intrusion’ into a given field might be ‘harmful’ or ‘inappropriate,’” or “even if there is the ‘potential’ for such consequences, a court cannot afford a plaintiff a *Bivens* remedy.” *Id.* at \_\_\_, 142 S. Ct. at 1805-06 (citations omitted).

## **B. Eighth Amendment**

The Eighth Amendment governs the treatment of convicted prisoners and forbids “cruel and unusual punishments.” U.S. Const. amend. VIII; *see Sandoval v. County of San Diego*, 985 F.3d 657, 667 (9th Cir. 2021). Although

the Constitution “does not mandate comfortable prisons,” it does not “permit inhumane ones.” *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 832 (1994) (citations omitted). Prison officials, therefore, may not use excessive physical force against prisoners, they “must ensure that inmates receive adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical care, and [they] must ‘take reasonable measures to guarantee the safety of the inmates.’” *Id.* (citations omitted).

### 1. Failure To Protect

Watanabe alleges in Count I that FDC Honolulu officials violated the Eighth Amendment because they failed to protect him from harm by other inmates.<sup>5</sup> ECF No. 8 at 6-8.

The Supreme Court has not explicitly held that a *Bivens* remedy is available under the Eighth Amendment for a failure to protect claim. The Court declines to decide whether Watanabe’s failure to protect claims arise in a new context or if “special factors” caution against extending *Bivens* to those claims during screening pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A, without briefing by the

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<sup>5</sup> At various points, Watanabe alleges that Defendants violated Bureau of Prisons policies. See ECF No. 8 at 6-8. The Supreme Court has never recognized a *Bivens* cause of action for purported violations of BOP policies. See *Islaam v. Kubicki*, 838 F. App’x 657, 661 (3d Cir. 2020). Indeed, as one court has stated, “[t]o allow a damages remedy for violations of BOP policy that do not amount to unconstitutional conduct would exceed the bounds of judicial function.” *Id.* (citation omitted); see also *deWilliams v. Groves*, No. ED CV 17-356-GW (PLA), 2019 WL 994407, at \*5 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 16, 2019) (“[T]he mere failure of a correctional officer to follow BOP rules, procedures, or policies does not rise to the level of a federal civil rights violation.” (citation omitted)); *Williams v. Rios*, No. 1:10-cv-01207-AWI-GBC (PC), 2011 WL 1627177, at \*3 (E.D. Cal. Apr. 28, 2011) (“[A] *Bivens* action must be founded upon a violation of constitutional rights, and a failure to adhere to administrative regulations does not equate to a constitutional violation.” (internal quotation marks and citations omitted)).

parties upon either a motion to dismiss or for summary judgment. *See Williams v. Kobayashi*, Civ. No. 1:18-cv-00336 DKW-RLP, 2018 WL 5258614, at \*7 (D. Haw. Oct. 22, 2018) (declining to decide during screening whether special factors cautioned against extending *Bivens* to substantive due process claims).

Even assuming the existence of a *Bivens* remedy, however, Watanabe fails to state a plausible claim. *See Hernandez*, 582 U.S. at \_\_\_, 137 S. Ct. at 2007 (“[D]isposing of a *Bivens* claim by resolving the constitutional question, while assuming the existence of a *Bivens* remedy—is appropriate in many cases.”); *Ansari v. Martinez*, 859 F. App’x 842, 842 (9th Cir. 2021) (“The district court properly dismissed [the plaintiff’s] Eighth Amendment claims because, even if a *Bivens* remedy is available for these claims, [the plaintiff] failed to allege facts sufficient to state a plausible claim.” (citations omitted)).

The Eighth Amendment imposes on prison officials a duty to “take reasonable measures to guarantee the safety of the inmates.” *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 832 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). Prison officials, therefore, “have a duty to protect prisoners from violence at the hands of other prisoners.” *Id.* at 833 (internal quotation marks, alteration, and citation omitted).

A prison official violates the Eighth Amendment, however, only when two requirements are met. “First, the deprivation alleged must be objectively, sufficiently serious.” *Id.* at 834 (citations omitted). “For a claim . . . based on a failure to prevent harm, the inmate must show that he is incarcerated under conditions posing a substantial risk of serious harm.” *Id.* (citation and footnote omitted). Second, the plaintiff must show deliberate indifference—that is, that “the [prison] official kn[ew] of and disregard[ed] an excessive risk to inmate . . . safety.” *Id.* at 837. “[T]he official

must both be aware of facts from which the inference could be drawn that a substantial risk of serious harm exists, and he must also draw the inference.” *Id.*

**a. Prior To The July 12, 2021 Disturbance**

Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that he faced a substantial risk of serious harm prior to July 12, 2021. Although prison officials housed in unit 5A various groups including “members from rival gangs,” “deportable aliens,” “pre-sentence inmates,” “pre-trial inmates,” “high security inmates through minimum security inmates,” and inmates with “pending orders for civil commitment due to psychiatric issues,” ECF No. 8 at 6, Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that there was a substantial risk of serious harm prior to July 12. For example, Watanabe does not allege that there was any gang-on-gang violence in unit 5A prior to July 12. Nor does he allege that his gang—that is, Uso—had previous issues with the Paisa’s. Moreover, Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that he was specifically targeted for harm by Paisa’s members because of his “history of gang . . . affiliation.” *Id.* Indeed, it is unclear if the four attackers were motivated by Watanabe’s gang membership or something else on July 12.

To the extent Watanabe is suggesting that housing members of different gangs together necessarily amounts to an Eighth Amendment violation, he is mistaken. *See Labatad v. Corr. Corp. of Am.*, 714 F.3d 1155, 1160 (9th Cir. 2013) (“[A]mong other problems, ‘the number of gang members housed and the high representation of certain gangs would place an unmanageable burden on prison administrators were they required to separate inmates by gangs.’” (quoting *Mayoral v. Sheahan*, 245 F.3d 934, 939 (7th Cir. 2001) (alterations omitted)); *Wilson v. Pierce County*, Case No. 16-5455 RJB, 2017 WL 3876625 (W.D. Wash. Sept. 5, 2017) (“The Ninth Circuit has held that a

jail’s policy of housing rival gang members together does not amount to a per se violation of the Eighth Amendment.” (citing *Labatad*, 714 F.3d at 1160)).

Even if prison officials knew both of Watanabe’s historical affiliation with the Uso gang and that rival gangs were being housed together in unit 5A, this is not enough to satisfy the first requirement of a failure to protect claim. *See Murphy v. Shelby*, No. C 07-02299 JF (PR), 2009 WL 773499, at \*4 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 23, 2009) (“Even assuming that Defendants knew that Plaintiff and [another inmate] were members of rival gangs, this information alone is not sufficient to raise the inference that putting them in the same cell would create a substantial risk of serious harm[.]”).

Moreover, Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that any Defendant acted with deliberate indifference to his safety prior to July 12, 2021. Although Watanabe alleges that Warden Derr housed together “rival gang members,” pre-trial detainees, and convicted inmates, and Robl placed “violent individuals” in the same housing unit and, sometimes, in the same cell, ECF No. 8 at 8, he does not say how any prison official knew of and disregarded an excessive risk to inmate safety. Watanabe does not allege that he complained to any prison official about his placement in unit 5A prior to July 12, nor does he allege that any other inmate voiced concern about gang-on-gang violence prior to the July 12 disturbance.

At one point, Watanabe alleges that Warden Derr and Robl “discussed the issue of housing rival gang members in the same units and cells with staff.” *Id.* Watanabe does not say, however, when this discussion allegedly occurred. He also does not say what conclusion Warden Derr and Robl reached at the end of that discussion. In short, Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that Warden Derr and

Robl knew of and disregarded an excessive risk to his safety prior to July 12 disturbance.

**b. After The July 12, 2021 Disturbance**

Watanabe appears to assert that his safety is currently threatened because prison officials returned him to unit 5A after he spent two months in the SHU. ECF No. 8 at 7.

Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that he currently faces a substantial risk of serious harm in unit 5A. Watanabe does not allege that the four men who attacked him on July 12 or anyone else has harmed him since he returned to unit 5A. Nor does he allege that anyone has attempted or even threatened to harm him.

Watanabe notes that two inmates in unit 5A—one a member of a “Northeno gang” and the other a member of a “Hawaiian gang”—got into a fight on March 24, 2022. *Id.* This single incident between two inmates, however, falls short of showing a substantial risk of serious harm to Watanabe. *See Hudson v. Palmer*, 468 U.S. 517, 526 (1984) (“Prisons, by definition, are places of involuntary confinement of persons who have a demonstrated proclivity for antisocial criminal, and often violent, conduct.”). Indeed, nothing suggests that these two inmates got into a fight because of their respective gang associations.

In addition, Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that a prison official is acting with deliberate indifference to his safety. Watanabe does not allege that he has ever complained to prison officials about his safety in unit 5A. Thus, Watanabe has not alleged that any Defendant knows of the purported danger that he faces. *See M.G. v. United States*, 603 F. App’x 616, 617 (9th Cir. 2015) (“To plead deliberate indifference, [the plaintiff] must allege nonconclusory facts from which we can infer defendants . . . actually knew of the danger [the plaintiff] faced.” (citations omitted)).

Watanabe's failure to protect claims in Count I are therefore DISMISSED without prejudice.

## **2. Denial Of Adequate Medical Care**

Watanabe alleges in Count II that he was denied adequate medical care following the July 12, 2021 disturbance. ECF No. 8 at 9.

As already noted, “*Carlson* recognized an implied claim under the Eighth Amendment’s cruel and unusual punishment clause for prison officials’ failure to provide adequate medical care.” *Hoffman v. Preston*, 26 F.4th 1059, 1064 (9th Cir. 2022) (citation omitted). “To establish a claim of inadequate medical care, a prisoner must first show a ‘serious medical need’ by demonstrating that failure to treat a prisoner’s condition could result in further significant injury or the unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain.” *Edmo v. Corizon, Inc.*, 935 F.3d 757, 785 (9th Cir. 2019) (per curiam) (some internal quotation marks and citation omitted). “If . . . a prisoner establishes a sufficiently serious medical need, that prisoner must then show the official’s response to the need was deliberately indifferent.” *Id.* at 786 (internal quotation marks, brackets, and citation omitted). “To show deliberate indifference, the plaintiff must show that the course of treatment the official chose was medically unacceptable under the circumstances and that the official chose this course in conscious disregard of an excessive risk to the plaintiff’s health.” *Id.* (internal quotation marks, brackets, and citation omitted). “Deliberate indifference is a ‘high legal standard’ beyond malpractice or gross negligence.” *Balla v. Idaho*, 29 F.4th 1019, 1025-26 (9th Cir. 2022) (citation omitted).

### **a. Nurse Nielsen**

Watanabe alleges that he was “severely beaten” by four members of the Paisa’s gang and “other Latino gang members” on July 12, 2021. ECF No. 8 at 7. During the

attack, someone beat Watanabe with a “lock in a sock.” *Id.* Later that evening, Watanabe was suffering from “severe pain and headaches,” and he asked to be seen by medical staff. *Id.* Watanabe “discussed his medical condition” with Nurse Nielsen, but Nielsen told him “to stop being a cry baby.” *Id.* Nielsen also refused to send Watanabe to the hospital. *Id.*

Months later, Watanabe was diagnosed with a fractured coccyx and “bone chips in soft tissue around his tailbone.” *Id.* These injuries caused Watanabe “severe pain.” *Id.* As the Court has already concluded, *see* ECF No. 5 at 17-18, Watanabe’s allegations plausibly state a denial of adequate medical care claim against Nielsen in his individual capacity that may proceed.

**b. Dr. Kwon**

Watanabe also alleges in Count II that Dr. Kwon denied him adequate medical care in the months after the July 12 disturbance. ECF No. 8 at 9.

According to Watanabe, “[f]rom July through January 2022, [Dr. Kwon] had an opportunity to properly diagnose [Watanabe’s] injuries, but failed to do so.” *Id.* Watanabe alleges that he submitted at least eleven informal complaints to Dr. Kwon. *Id.* at 8.

Watanabe does not say, however, when he submitted the informal complaints to Dr. Kwon or what he said in them. In addition, although Watanabe alleges that he “received no actual treatment,” *id.* at 7, he acknowledges that he did receive over-the-counter pain medication. *Id.* Watanabe also admits that someone diagnosed his fractured coccyx and that Health Services agreed to send him to see a specialist. *Id.* at 7, 9. It is unclear if Dr. Kwon played a role in providing this care. Thus, Watanabe has not plausibly alleged that Dr. Kwon consciously disregarded a serious medical

need. *See Lemire v. Cal. Dep’t of Corr. & Rehab.*, 726 F.3d 1062, 1081-82 (9th Cir. 2013) (“The indifference to a prisoner’s medical needs must be substantial. Mere ‘indifference,’ ‘negligence,’ or ‘medical malpractice’ will not support this claim.” (quoting *Broughton v. Cutter Labs.*, 622 F.2d 458, 460 (9th Cir. 1980)) (brackets and some internal quotation marks omitted). Watanabe’s denial of adequate medical care claims against Dr. Kwon are therefore DISMISSED without prejudice.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

(1) Watanabe states a denial of adequate medical care claim in Count II against Nielsen in his individual capacity that may proceed.

(2) Watanabe’s failure to protect claims in Count I and his other denial of adequate medical care claim in Count II are DISMISSED without prejudice. Dismissal of these claims does not foreclose Watanabe from later filing an amended pleading, subject to the requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 15 and any applicable orders of this Court.

(3) The United States Marshal is ORDERED to serve the FAC, ECF No. 8, and a summons on Defendant Francis Nielsen, in addition to the United States, as directed by Watanabe, according to the requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(i). After service is perfected, Defendant Nielsen shall file a responsive pleading within the time allowed under Fed. R. Civ. P. 12.

#### **V. SERVICE ORDER**

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

(1) For Defendant Francis Nielsen, the Clerk is directed to send to Plaintiff: one copy of the FAC, ECF No. 8; one completed summons; one USM-285 form; one Notice of Lawsuit and Request for Waiver of Service of

Summons form (AO 398); two Waiver of Service of Summons forms (AO 399); and an instruction sheet.

(2) For the United States, see Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(i)(3), the Clerk is directed to send to Plaintiff two additional copies of the FAC, ECF No. 8; two completed summonses; and two USM-285 forms.

(3) The Clerk shall also send a copy of this Order to the U.S. Marshal at P.O. Box 50184, Honolulu, HI 96850.

(4) For Defendant Nielsen, Plaintiff shall complete the forms as directed and submit the following documents to the U.S. Marshal in Honolulu, Hawai‘i: a completed USM-285 form; a copy of the FAC, ECF No. 8; the completed summons; a completed Notice of Lawsuit and Request for Waiver of Service of Summons form (AO 398); and two completed Waiver of Service of Summons forms (AO 399). For the United States, Plaintiff shall complete the forms as directed and submit to the U.S. Marshal: two completed USM-285 forms; two copies each of the FAC, ECF No. 8; and the two completed summonses.

(5) Upon receipt of these documents from Plaintiff, the U.S. Marshal shall mail to Defendant Nielsen: a copy of the FAC, ECF No. 8; a completed Notice of Lawsuit and Request for Waiver of Service form (AO 398); and two completed Waiver of Service of Summons forms (AO 399), as directed by Plaintiff without payment of costs. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(c)(3). The U.S. Marshal shall deliver a copy of the completed summons, the FAC, ECF No. 8, to the United States Attorney for the District of Hawaii and the Attorney General of the United States as directed by Plaintiff without payment of costs.

(6) For Defendant Nielsen, the U.S. Marshal shall retain the completed summons and a copy of the FAC, ECF No. 8. The U.S. Marshal shall file a returned Waiver of

Service of Summons form as well as any Waiver of Service of Summons form that is returned as undeliverable, as soon as it is received.

(7) If Defendant Nielsen does not return a Waiver of Service of Summons form within sixty days from the date that such forms are mailed, the U.S. Marshal shall:

a. Personally serve such Defendant pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4 and 28 U.S.C. §566(c).

b. Within ten days after personal service is effected, file the return of service for such Defendant, along with evidence of any attempts to secure a waiver of service of summons and of the costs subsequently incurred in effecting service. Said costs shall be enumerated on the USM-285 form and shall include the costs incurred by the U.S. Marshal's office in photocopying additional copies of the summons, the FAC, and for preparing new USM-285 forms, if required. Costs of service will be taxed against the personally served Defendant in accordance with the provisions of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(d)(2).

(8) Plaintiff is cautioned that if he fails to comply with this Order and his non-compliance prevents timely and proper service as set forth in Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(m), this action is subject to dismissal for failure to serve.

(9) Defendant Nielsen shall file a responsive pleading to the FAC, ECF No. 8, within the time set forth in Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12.

(10) Plaintiff shall inform the Court of any change of address by filing a "NOTICE OF CHANGE OF ADDRESS." The notice shall contain only information about the change of address and its effective date and shall not include requests for other relief. Failure to file such notice may result in the dismissal of the action for failure to prosecute under Fed. R. Civ. P. 41(b).

(11) After the FAC, ECF No. 8, is served and Defendant Nielsen has filed an answer or responsive pleading, Plaintiff's documents are deemed served when they are electronically filed by the court. The United States Marshal is not responsible for serving these documents on Plaintiff's behalf.

(12) Until the FAC, ECF No. 8, is served and Defendant Nielsen or his attorneys file a notice of appearance, Plaintiff SHALL NOT FILE MOTIONS OR OTHER DOCUMENTS with the Court.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: Honolulu, Hawai'i, August 2, 2022.

[signature]

Jill A. Otake

United States District Judge

**APPENDIX E**  
**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS**  
**FOR THE NINTH DISTRICT**

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KEKAI WATANABE,

*Plaintiff-Appellant,*

v.

ESTELA DERR; K. ROBL, MR.; NIELSEN, NURSE;  
KWON, DR.,

*Defendants-Appellees.*

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No. 23-15605

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D.C. No. 1:22-cv-00168-JAO-RT

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ORDER

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Filed June 5, 2025

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Before: RICHARD A. PAEZ, MILAN D. SMITH, JR.,  
and LUCY H. KOH, Circuit Judges.

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Order;

Statement by Judges Paez and Koh;

Dissent by Judge R. Nielson;

Dissent by Judge Collins

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**ORDER**

The petition for panel rehearing (Dkt. 54) is DENIED. A judge of the court requested a vote on en banc rehearing. The matter failed to receive a majority of the votes of the nonrecused active judges in favor of en banc rehearing. Fed. R. App. P. 40(c). Appellees' petition for rehearing en banc (Dkt. 54) is thus DENIED.

PAEZ and KOH, Circuit Judges, respecting the denial of rehearing en banc:

One who reads Judge Nelson's dissent from the denial of rehearing en banc might be tempted to believe that the majority opinion broke ground for new *Bivens* claims and ignored Supreme Court directives. On the contrary, Supreme Court and Ninth Circuit precedents support the result that the panel majority reached. This statement aims to correct the mischaracterizations—regarding the majority opinion and the state of the law—upon which Judge Nelson's dissent relies.

Under the two-step framework governing *Bivens* actions, Kekai Watanabe's Eighth Amendment deliberate indifference claims are cognizable because they arise from the same context as *Carlson v. Green*, 446 U.S. 14 (1980). *Watanabe* and *Carlson* involve the same officer rank, type and specificity of official action, judicial guidance, governing legal mandate, and risk of disruptive intrusion by the Judiciary into the functioning of the other branches. *See Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 582 U.S. 120, 139-40 (2017). And importantly, no other “meaningful” differences distinguish the context of Watanabe's claims from *Carlson*. *See id.*

Judge Nelson's dissent asserts that two features of Watanabe's case distinguish it from *Carlson*: the Bureau of Prisons's Administrative Remedies Program (ARP), 28 C.F.R. § 542, and the severity of the alleged misconduct and

injury. The ARP was in place when *Carlson* was decided and therefore does not create a “new” factual context. Moreover, alternative remedies like the ARP are not typically germane to the first step of the *Bivens* analysis, which examines the context of the constitutional violation itself—not the appropriate remedy for that violation. With respect to severity, Judge Nelson’s dissent offers neither binding authority nor an adequate rationale establishing that a difference in severity can create a new *Bivens* context, as opposed to merely informing the merits of the constitutional violation. And regardless, the mistreatment that Watanabe alleges is not necessarily meaningfully less severe than the mistreatment at issue in *Carlson*.

In deciding this case, the panel majority adhered faithfully to Ninth Circuit and Supreme Court precedent. Although the circuits have split on the role of alternative remedies and the continued viability of *Carlson* actions, that split predicated the majority opinion and would have persisted regardless of en banc rehearing.

I.

A.

The existence of the ARP does not place Watanabe’s claim within a new context because it already existed when the Supreme Court decided *Carlson*. The final rule creating the ARP was published and became effective in October and November of 1979, while *Carlson* was decided in 1980. *See* Administrative Remedy Program, 44 Fed. Reg. 62,250 (Oct. 29, 1979) (to be codified at 28 C.F.R. § 542). Although the program has been amended since, those changes did not alter its nature or basic mechanisms. *See, e.g.*, Administrative Remedy Program, 61 Fed. Reg. 88 (Jan. 2, 1996) (to be codified at 28 C.F.R. § 542).

In laying out the first step of its two-step *Bivens* analysis, *Ziglar* instructs courts to evaluate whether a “case is different in a meaningful way from previous *Bivens* cases” to determine whether the context is “new.” 582 U.S. at 139. Because the ARP was in place when *Carlson* was decided, it cannot be a “meaningful difference” or make for a “new” context.<sup>1</sup>

#### B.

The majority opinion in *Watanabe* does not hold that alternative remedies like the ARP can never be considered at step one, but only that “the existence of alternative remedial structures does not render this case a new context.” *Watanabe v. Derr*, 115 F.4th 1034, 1042 (2024). That alternative remedies are generally not relevant at step one, however, is supported by the structure of the *Ziglar* two-step analysis. *Ziglar*’s first step requires courts to ask whether any “meaningful differences” distinguish the case from one of the original three *Bivens* cases. 582 U.S. at 139. Meaningful differences might include:

the rank of the officers involved; the constitutional right at issue; the generality or specificity of the official action; the extent of judicial guidance as to how an officer should respond to the problem or emergency to be

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<sup>1</sup> Judge Nelson’s dissent asserts that “[this], of course, is not the test,” because courts must instead examine “special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider.” R. Nelson Dissent 99-100. But a “special factor that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider” is only relevant if it constitutes a difference between contexts. *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139-40 (“A case might differ in a meaningful way because of . . . the presence of potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider.”). In other words, a case does not meaningfully differ from a previous *Bivens* case just because the Supreme Court did not address a common feature between the instant case and the previous *Bivens* case. To hold otherwise would eviscerate those original *Bivens* cases.

confronted; the statutory or other legal mandate under which the officer was operating; the risk of disruptive intrusion by the Judiciary into the functioning of other branches; or the presence of potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider.

*Id.* at 139-40. If the case does not meaningfully differ from one of the three recognized *Bivens* contexts, then the plaintiff has a damages remedy under that precedent. *Id.* If the case does differ, the court must then consider whether “there are special factors counselling hesitation in the absence of affirmative action by Congress.” *Id.* at 136 (cleaned up). This second step focuses on “whether the Judiciary is well suited, absent congressional action or instruction, to consider and weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.” *Id.*

“Special factors” can therefore be considered at both steps, but the meaning of the term takes on a different focus when moving from the first step to the second. At the first step, courts consider special differentiating factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider; at the second, courts consider “special factors counselling hesitation” in the absence of congressional action.

The difference between step one and step two shows why alternative remedies take on greater significance at step two. Step one focuses on the alleged violation, including the nature of the right violated, the mechanism of harm, the identity of the federal official and the guidance available to that official, and the factual and legal context shaping how the alleged violation should be understood and interpreted. *See Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139-40. Step two, by contrast, focuses on remedies. In asking whether the judiciary is best equipped to provide a remedy, it considers, among other matters, whether Congress or the Executive has already done so. *See Egbert v. Boule*, 596 U.S.

482, 492-93 (2021). While the two steps may overlap or collapse, they nonetheless refer to distinct analyses. *See id.* And when alternative remedies are unrelated to the official’s conduct, the constitutional right allegedly violated, or the legal framework governing the challenged action, they bear little significance at step one, which focuses on the context of the violation itself.

The Supreme Court has considered alternative remedies only when deciding whether to extend *Bivens* to a new context (step two). *See Watanabe*, 115 F.4th at 1042 (noting that *Egbert* “clarified that the existence of alternative remedial structures can be one ‘special factor’ to be considered at the *second* step of the *Bivens* analysis”). In *Ziglar*, the Court laid out a comprehensive *Bivens* framework without suggesting that alternative remedies, such as the ARP, generally have a role at step one. *See* 582 U.S. at 136-37, 139-40. *Ziglar* consistently treated alternative remedies as step-two special factors. For instance, the Court stated that “the existence of alternative remedies usually precludes a court from authorizing a *Bivens* action.” *Id.* at 148. This language refers to step two because courts are not called upon to authorize a new remedy at step one; at step one, the remedy has already been authorized by *Bivens*, *Davis*, or *Carlson*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Judge Nelson’s dissent interprets this portion of the *Ziglar* opinion as considering alternative remedies as part of a step-one analysis. R. Nelson Dissent 97-99. We understand this passage as identifying a new context at step one, discussing the role that alternative remedies and the PLRA might play in a step-*two* analysis, and then remanding for the Court of Appeals to perform that analysis in the first instance. *See Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 147-49. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the Court expressed uncertainty regarding the available alternative remedies (“there *might* have been alternative remedies available”) and then instructed the Court of Appeals to identify those remedies and apply them at step two (“the Court of Appeals should have . . . analyzed

Judge Nelson's dissent asserts that the ARP is a step-one "special factor that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider" because the *Carlson* plaintiff, who was the deceased inmate's mother, "could not herself utilize the ARP as an alternative remedy against the prison officials alleged to have unconstitutionally caused her son's death." R. Nelson Dissent 98. But if this distinction were meaningful, the Supreme Court would have noted it when considering the conditions-of-confinement claims brought by the *Ziglar* plaintiffs, who analogized to *Carlson* and to whom the ARP was available. *See* 582 U.S. at 147.

And more importantly, the fact that the *Carlson* plaintiff could not herself use the ARP is irrelevant under the Supreme Court's approach to alternative remedies. The Supreme Court has repeatedly made clear that alternative remedies are only relevant to *Bivens* claims because Congressional or Executive policymaking informs the appropriateness of a judicial remedy. *See Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 493, 498. Whether the alternative remedy affords adequate or substitute relief to the plaintiff is not relevant. *Id.* at 493. Thus, to the extent that the ARP represents the Executive's judgment about how prisoner complaints concerning their medical care should be addressed (i.e., the appropriate remedial scheme for deterring officer misconduct in that area), the ARP was as relevant in *Carlson* as it is in *Watanabe*. *See id.* And because *Carlson* afforded a remedy despite the existence of the ARP, the ARP is not a step-one special factor creating a new context in *Watanabe*.

Judge Nelson's dissent asserts that "the fact that the mother in *Carlson* could not use a remedy that was available

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whether there were alternative remedies available or other 'sound reasons to think Congress might doubt the efficacy or necessity of a damages remedy' in a suit like this one"). *Id.* at 148-49 (emphasis added).

to Watanabe” constitutes a “meaningful difference.” R. Nelson Dissent 100. But the availability, effectiveness, or adequacy of an alternative remedy to a particular plaintiff is expressly irrelevant to the analysis of *Bivens* claims under Supreme Court precedent. *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 493 (“Importantly, the relevant question is not whether a *Bivens* action would ‘disrup[t]’ a remedial scheme or whether the court ‘should provide for a wrong that would otherwise go unredressed.’ Nor does it matter that ‘existing remedies do not provide complete relief.’” (internal citations omitted)).

### C.

Contrary to Judge Nelson’s dissent, *Harper v. Nedd* does not conflict with the *Watanabe* majority opinion. *See* R. Nelson Dissent 109-111. *Harper* presented an exception to the principle that alternative remedies are generally significant at step two, not step one. *Harper* held that the alternative remedies afforded by the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA)<sup>3</sup> made for a new *Bivens* context where the plaintiff alleged that officials violated his right to due process as they performed their duties in affording him those remedies. 71 F.4th 1181, 1187 (9th Cir. 2023). In *Harper*, unlike in *Watanabe*, the “alternative remedial structures” were inextricable from the constitutional violation and therefore properly considered at step one. And because *Watanabe* did not hold that alternative remedies could never be relevant at step one, the cases do not conflict. 115 F.4th at 1042.

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<sup>3</sup> The CSRA is a comprehensive legal scheme governing federal employment. *See* Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA), Pub. L. 95-454, 92 Stat. 1111 (1978) (codified in various sections of 5 U.S.C.); *id.* § 4303 (requiring detailed notice of and opportunities to challenge adverse employment actions based on unacceptable performance); *id.* § 7501 (allowing an employee to be suspended without pay for 14 days, as Harper was); *id.* §§ 7512, 7513(d), 7703(b)(1) (appeal procedures).

Harper, a former Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ranger, argued that Department of the Interior and BLM officials violated his Fifth Amendment due process rights as he pursued the CSRA's remedial procedures to address adverse employment actions taken against him. 71 F.4th at 1183-84; *see id.* at 1188 (noting that Harper "alleged that Defendants took 'ultra vires actions' that 'corrupted' the CSRA process and violated his Fifth Amendment rights"); *id.* at 1187 n.1 (noting that Harper alleged "that Defendants conspired to deprive him of an appeal to the [Merit Systems Protection Board].").

As we observed throughout *Harper*, "the CSRA guides the Executive Branch in addressing disciplinary disputes" like Harper's. *Id.* at 1188. The *Harper* opinion made clear that the CSRA was relevant because it constituted a distinct "statutory or other legal mandate under which the officer was operating." *Id.* at 1187. The CSRA was part and parcel of Harper's alleged violation. By contrast, Watanabe complained of conduct entirely separate from the administration of the ARP. The ARP was not inextricable from the alleged constitutional violation, as in *Harper*. It is not then appropriately considered at the first step of the *Bivens* analysis, which focuses on the context of the alleged violation.

## II.

Judge Nelson's dissent argues that the severity of misconduct or injury in Watanabe's case created a new context from *Carlson*. R. Nelson Dissent 102-106. But when a federal prisoner alleges deliberate indifference to his serious medical needs, severity informs the merits of the constitutional claim. If the prison official's conduct is not so severe as to rise to the level of deliberate indifference, or if the plaintiff's injuries are not so severe as to suggest that his medical needs were serious, then the claim fails. Otherwise, any attempt to distinguish a *Carlson* claim

based on the severity of the injury or misconduct requires arbitrary line-drawing which has no basis in the *Bivens* doctrine. *See Brooks v. Richardson*, 131 F.4th 613, 615 (7th Cir. 2025) (Easterbrook, J.) (“As for the duration of the poor care or the gravity of the condition: these seem more pertinent to the merits than to determining the scope of the holding in *Carlson*.”). “To conclude that a claim extends *Carlson* because it is weaker than the claim in *Carlson* is to undermine *Carlson* itself—the very thing the Supreme Court has asked us not to do.” *Waltermeyer v. Hazlewood*, 136 F.4th 361, 371 (1st Cir. 2025) (Breyer, J., dissenting).

In arguing that Watanabe’s context is new because it involved less severe mistreatment, Judge Nelson relies on the First Circuit’s *Waltermeyer v. Hazlewood*. But *Waltermeyer* proves our point: while the court found a new context because of the lesser severity of the alleged misconduct, it observed that the alleged conduct was so minor that it did not constitute a violation of the Eighth Amendment at all. For his knee pain, Waltermeyer “received multiple types of non-surgical medical treatments,” including “bi-annual cortisone injections (although he wanted to receive the injections every month), pain medication, special shoes, knee braces, access to a low bunk, and a cane.” *Id.* at 365. Waltermeyer’s claims did not involve “gross inadequacy” of care. *Id.* at 366. Rather, Waltermeyer was treated extensively in accordance with doctors’ recommendations, and the only dispute over his medical care was that he preferred a different treatment which was neither recommended by a consulting physician nor indicated by his MRI results. *Id.* at 366-67. The court therefore found that “[t]here was no deliberate indifference analogous to *Carlson*.” *Id.* at 367. *Waltermeyer* stands for the proposition that allegations that do not establish a constitutional

violation are not actionable under *Bivens*, but the opinion has less relevance to claims where the allegations are severe enough to violate the Eighth Amendment.

Judge Nelson's dissent suggests that *Ziglar* established a role for severity in distinguishing a new context. R. Nelson Dissent 102-105. But *Ziglar*'s observation that the detainees' injuries were "just as compelling" as those in *Carlson* does not imply that severity alone can constitute a sufficiently "meaningful" difference to create a new context. See *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 146-47. Moreover, in finding that the claims in *Ziglar*, which involved systematic abuse of hundreds of detainees, were "just as compelling" as the *Carlson* plaintiff's death by asthma attack, *Ziglar* analyzed severity at a remarkably high level of generality. Although the harms in *Carlson* and *Ziglar* were nothing alike, the Court still found them to be "parallel." *Id.* at 147. Surely, the compelling nature of the injury differs less between *Carlson* and *Watanabe* than between *Carlson* and *Ziglar*.<sup>4</sup>

### III.

Although we acknowledge a circuit split on the continued viability of *Carlson* actions, our opinion neither created nor deepened that split. The majority opinion in *Watanabe* joined the Sixth Circuit in holding that the ARP does not distinguish *Carlson* actions at step one. *Watanabe* is also aligned with the Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Circuits, all of which recently upheld *Carlson* claims.

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<sup>4</sup> Even if severity could distinguish a new context, the wrongful conduct and injuries Watanabe suffered were not meaningfully less severe than those in *Carlson*. The treating nurse found Watanabe—at a minimum—to have spasms, warmth to the touch, tenderness, and pain at a level ten. The nurse provided no meaningful treatment despite Watanabe's repeated pleas over several months.

*Johnson v. Terry*, which Judge Nelson’s dissent highlights, stands alone in foreclosing a *Carlson* action for deliberate medical indifference based on the existence of the ARP. 119 F.4th 840, 858-61 (11th Cir. 2024). Counterbalancing the Eleventh Circuit is the Sixth, which explicitly holds that under *Carlson*, “prisoners may bring Eighth Amendment claims against prison officials despite the existence of the ARP,” noting that “the ARP, which has been in effect for nearly four decades . . . did not affect the Supreme Court’s conclusion in *Carlson*.” *Koprowski v. Baker*, 822 F.3d 248, 256-57 (6th Cir. 2016). This decision pre-dated *Ziglar*, which clarified the Supreme Court’s strict approach to *Bivens*. However, three years after *Ziglar*, the Sixth Circuit confirmed its holding, writing that its earlier decision in *Koprowski* had “observed . . . that the grievance system’s existence did not suffice to reject a *Bivens* claim already in existence.” *Callahan v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 965 F.3d 520, 525 (6th Cir. 2020).

The Seventh Circuit also diverged from the Eleventh in *Brooks v. Richardson*. In *Brooks*, the court reversed the dismissal of claims under *Carlson* arising from prison officials’ misdiagnosis and failure to treat appendicitis, which caused the plaintiff to suffer a ruptured appendix and peritonitis. 131 F.4th at 614. In deciding *Brooks*, the Seventh Circuit was presented with—and evidently rejected—the argument that the ARP created a new context at step one. See Brief of Defendants-Appellees, *Brooks v. Richardson*, 2024 WL 4291216, at \*12, 20.

The Fourth and Fifth Circuits have also upheld *Carlson* actions post-*Ziglar* and post-*Egbert*. The Fourth Circuit’s unpublished *Masias v. Hodges* found a *Bivens* remedy available to a plaintiff alleging an inadequately treated ankle injury, nasal infection, and hernia, reversing the district court’s finding of a new context on the basis of sever-

ity. No. 21-6591, 2023 WL 2610230, at \*1-2 (4th Cir. Mar. 23, 2023). *Masias* relied on *Langford v. Joyner*, 62 F.4th 122, 126-27 (4th Cir. 2023), which evaluated a *Bivens* complaint for deliberate indifference to medical needs involving a bowel obstruction and abdominal infection. *Id.* at \*2.

Similarly, the Fifth Circuit's *Vaughn v. Bassett* addressed deliberate medical indifference concerning an inmate's facial injuries sustained during a softball match, finding the context was the same as *Carlson* despite minor factual differences. No. 22-10962, 2024 WL 2891897, at \*1, 4 (5th Cir. June 10, 2024) (unpublished). In doing so, it relied on several published decisions including *Carlucci v. Chapa*, 884 F.3d 534 (5th Cir. 2018). *Id.* at \*5. *Carlucci* held that the plaintiff stated a plausible claim for relief when prison officials did not provide oral surgery to prevent the plaintiff's teeth from hitting each other and breaking or cracking. 884 F.3d at 539.

Because these circuits each resolved the propriety of the *Bivens* claim at step one, they had no reason to discuss the ARP, which is not typically a step-one special factor in a *Carlson* action. But in upholding *Carlson* actions post-*Ziglar*, each of these circuits has adopted a position which affords virtually no role for the ARP in making a new context at step one.

#### IV.

Despite the accusations in Judge Nelson's dissent, the majority opinion correctly concluded that Watanabe's claims are identical in every meaningful way to the claims in *Carlson*. This conclusion is unaffected by the ARP, which existed when *Carlson* was decided. Moreover, *Ziglar* and *Egbert* suggest consideration of alternative remedies, in the ordinary case and within the context of *Carlson*, only at step two. Lesser severity, on the other hand, may fore-

close a *Bivens* action where the claims do not establish a constitutional violation, but that is not the case here.

The majority opinion is in line with the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Circuits in holding that *Carlson* actions remain viable. The Supreme Court itself has likewise declined to undermine the viability of the original *Bivens* trio. *See, e.g., Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 134; *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 502. Even if the reasoning of *Ziglar* and *Egbert* undercuts *Carlson*—because of the ARP or any other factor—we should not rush to effectively overrule Supreme Court precedent. *See Hohn v. United States*, 524 U.S. 236, 252-53 (1998) (holding that decisions of the Supreme Court “remain binding precedent until [it] see[s] fit to reconsider them, regardless of whether subsequent cases have raised doubts about their continuing vitality”). Because *Carlson* actions remain viable and because the majority opinion is in line with that decision and other post-*Bivens* decisions, the court properly declined to take this case en banc.

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R. NELSON, Circuit Judge, joined by CALLAHAN, M. SMITH, IKUTA, BENNETT, BADE, LEE, BRESS, BUMATAY, and VANDYKE, Circuit Judges, dissenting from the denial of rehearing en banc:

In *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971), the Supreme Court recognized for the first time an implied cause of action for a constitutional violation by federal officials. The Supreme Court has not recognized a new *Bivens* claim in 45 years. To the contrary, *Bivens* has been all but overruled. Time and again, the Supreme Court has urged caution in recognizing *Bivens* claims for damages against federal officials. *See Egbert v. Boule*, 596 U.S. 482, 491 (2022); *Hernandez v. Mesa*, 589 U.S. 93, 102 (2020); *Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 582 U.S. 120, 139 (2017). *Bivens* claims are available

only if a plaintiff’s allegations are analogous to one of three cases in which the Court has acknowledged a *Bivens* remedy. See *Bivens*, 403 U.S. at 389; *Davis v. Passman*, 442 U.S. 228 (1979); *Carlson v. Green*, 446 U.S. 14 (1980). If a plaintiff’s claim is effectively identical to one of these cases, then a cause of action is available under *Bivens*. But if there is a single meaningful difference between a plaintiff’s claim and a prior *Bivens* case, then the claim arises in a “new *Bivens* context.” *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139. At that point, a court must consider whether it can extend *Bivens* to encompass the claim.

Most courts follow the Supreme Court’s directive and rarely recognize *Bivens* claims. Until the majority’s decision, even the Ninth Circuit—which has become famous for repeatedly ignoring the Supreme Court on *Bivens* questions—seemed to get the message. In the last three years, we have rejected *Bivens* claims in eight published opinions (and even more in unpublished dispositions). See, e.g., *Harper v. Nedd*, 71 F.4th 1181, 1184 (9th Cir. 2023). The majority opinion reverts to a sad time in our court’s bygone history where we breathed life into *Bivens*—again and again—even when the Supreme Court told us to stop. See, e.g., *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 486; *Minneci v. Pollard*, 565 U.S. 118, 122 (2012); *Hui v. Castaneda*, 559 U.S. 799, 812-13 (2010); *Schweiker v. Chilicky*, 487 U.S. 412, 419-20 (1988); *Chappell v. Wallace*, 462 U.S. 296, 298 (1983); see also *FDIC v. Meyer*, 510 U.S. 471, 484 (1994) (“We know of no Court of Appeals decision, other than the Ninth Circuit’s below, that has implied a *Bivens*-type cause of action directly against a federal agency.”). Add this case to the infamous list—which should have had its last entry years ago.

The *Bivens* analysis requires a two-step inquiry. It’s the first step—the new context analysis—where most of the action occurs. The Court’s “understanding of a ‘new

context' is broad," *Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 102, and the requirements for identifying a new context are "easily satisfied," *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 149. The majority opinion, against a compelling dissent by Judge M. Smith, turns that guidance on its head. It holds that a plaintiff's access to alternative remedies, meaning remedies besides money damages, does not create a new *Bivens* context. That is true, the panel majority holds, even when such remedies were not considered in the Court's previous *Bivens* cases. The majority's holding is wrong—not only under Supreme Court precedent, but also our own. What's more, the majority recognizes a circuit split, *see* Statement at 86, diverging from at least two other circuits which consider the availability of alternative remedies as part of the new context analysis. The en banc court should have fixed the majority's error. Because we didn't, the Supreme Court will hopefully resolve the multiple deep circuit splits over *Carlson*-related *Bivens* actions. *See infra*, at 103-106; Collins Dissent at 112, 116. The majority's statement underscores the need for Supreme Court review, recognizing the inter-circuit tension on the availability of Eighth Amendment claims under *Bivens*. *See* Statement at 85-88. I dissent from our court's decision to let this case pass.

I

A

Under 42 U.S.C. §1983, a plaintiff may seek damages from a state official who, while acting under color of state law, violated a federal constitutional right. *See Monroe v. Pape*, 365 U.S. 167, 171-87 (1961). Congress has never enacted an analogous statute for constitutional claims against federal officials.

Still, in *Bivens*, the Supreme Court created for the first time an implied cause of action against federal officials for unreasonable searches and seizures under the Fourth

Amendment. 403 U.S. at 396-97. Over the next decade, the Court expanded *Bivens* to create two more implied damages claims. The first, a sex discrimination claim by a former congressional staffer under the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause, came in *Davis*, 442 U.S. at 248-49. Then, in *Carlson*, the Court created an Eighth Amendment inadequate-care claim against federal prison officials who failed to treat an inmate's asthma, leading to his death. 446 U.S. at 16 n.1, 17-19.

The Court has since refused to extend *Bivens* further. Over time, the Court has “come to appreciate more fully the tension between judicially created causes of action and the Constitution’s separation of legislative and judicial power.” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 491 (internal quotation marks omitted). Indeed, in the 45 years since *Carlson*, the Court has declined to recognize a *Bivens* claim in 12 cases. *See Harper*, 71 F.4th at 1185 (citing *Tate v. Harmon*, 54 F.4th 839, 843 (4th Cir. 2022)). In the last three, it confirmed that “the heady days in which the Court assumed common-law powers to create causes of action” are long gone. *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 491 (cleaned up); *see also Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 99-101; *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 138-40. Yet the doctrine narrowly lives on in theory—though expanding *Bivens* is “a disfavored judicial activity.” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 491 (quotation omitted).

When faced with a proposed *Bivens* claim, our analysis boils down to two steps. At step one, we ask whether the plaintiff’s claim presents “a new *Bivens* context.” *Id.* at 492 (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139). A context is “new” if the case is “different in a meaningful way” from the Court’s three previous *Bivens* cases. *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139. To aid in that inquiry, *Ziglar* provided a non-exhaustive list of differences meaningful enough to make a given context new. *Id.* at 139-40. For example, “[a] case might

differ in a meaningful way because of the rank of the officers involved; the constitutional right at issue; the generality or specificity of the official action; the extent of judicial guidance as to how an officer should respond to the problem or emergency to be confronted; the statutory or other legal mandate under which the officer was operating; [or] the risk of disruptive intrusion by the Judiciary into the functioning of other branches.” *Id.* A new context also arises with “the presence of potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases”—*Davis*, *Carlson*, and *Bivens* itself—“did not consider.” *Id.* at 140.

If a claim arises in a new context, we move to step two. There, we look for any “‘special factors’ indicating that the Judiciary is at least arguably less equipped than Congress to ‘weigh the costs and benefits of allowing a damages action to proceed.’” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492 (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 136). Put simply, we ask if there is “reason to pause before applying *Bivens* in a new context.” *Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 102. If so, “we reject the request.” *Id.*

Most recently, the Court clarified that the two steps “often resolve to a single question: whether there is any reason to think that Congress might be better equipped to create a damages remedy.” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492. “[I]f there is any reason to think that ‘judicial intrusion’ into a given field might be ‘harmful’ or ‘inappropriate,’” or “even if there is the ‘potential’ for such consequences, a court cannot afford a plaintiff a *Bivens* remedy.” *Id.* at 496 (first quoting *United States v. Stanley*, 483 U.S. 669, 681 (1987); then quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 140).

## B

Kekai Watanabe was a federal inmate at a detention center in Honolulu, Hawaii. In 2021, he was beaten by rival gang members with an improvised weapon known as a “lock in a sock.” Once order was restored, about 20

inmates—Watanabe included—were placed in solitary confinement. Prison officials recorded Watanabe’s “known or visible” injuries and referred him to sick call, but they did not take him to the hospital.

Several days later, Watanabe was evaluated by defendant Francis Nielsen, a nurse at the prison. Medical records indicate that Watanabe told Nielsen he was experiencing lower back pain, rating the pain as a “10.” While Watanabe appeared “irritable” and “distressed,” the results of his physical examination were mostly “normal.” Nielsen consulted an on-call provider, entered new medication orders for an intramuscular injection and over-the-counter painkillers, encouraged gentle stretching, and told Watanabe to follow up with sick call. Yet Watanabe alleges that Nielsen did not offer any treatment and instead told him “to stop being a cry baby.” Nielsen allegedly declined Watanabe’s request to go to the hospital.

Watanabe remained in solitary confinement for two months. He alleges that he submitted multiple requests for medical attention, most of which were ignored, and that the attention he did receive “was limited to over the counter pain medication.” Months later, Watanabe was diagnosed with a fractured coccyx with bone chips in the surrounding soft tissue. At that point, prison officials agreed to refer Watanabe to a specialist.

Soon after, Watanabe sued Nielsen and other BOP officials, alleging that they violated the Eighth Amendment through their deliberate indifference to his serious medical needs. Watanabe sought \$3 million in damages and injunctive relief directing the warden “to follow United States law regarding the housing of federal inmates.”

Ultimately, the district court agreed with Nielsen that Watanabe did not have a valid cause of action under *Bivens*. Applying the Supreme Court’s two-step framework, the

district court held that because Watanabe’s claim was meaningfully different from the Eighth Amendment claim in *Carlson*, his claim arose in a new *Bivens* context.

As part of that analysis, the district court explained that Watanabe had access to alternative remedies that were not considered in *Carlson*—here, the Federal Bureau of Prisons’ Administrative Remedy Program (ARP). *See* 28 C.F.R. § 542.10(a) (“The purpose of the [ARP] is to allow an inmate to seek formal review of an issue relating to any aspect of his/her own confinement.”); *Corr. Servs. Corp. v. Malesko*, 534 U.S. 61, 74 (2001) (the ARP “provides yet another means through which allegedly unconstitutional actions and policies can be brought to the attention of [prison officials] and prevented from recurring”). The availability of alternative remedies confirmed that Watanabe’s claim arose in a new *Bivens* context. The district court then found that the ARP and other special factors counseled against extending *Bivens* to cover Watanabe’s claim.

## C

The panel majority reversed, holding that Watanabe’s claim was in all meaningful respects identical to *Carlson*. *Watanabe v. Derr*, 115 F.4th 1034, 1039 (9th Cir. 2024). The majority ticked through *Ziglar*’s new context factors, noting several similarities to the Eighth Amendment claim alleged in *Carlson*. *Id.* (citing *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139-40). But when the majority reached the final *Ziglar* factors—including the “presence of potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider”—it veered off course. *See* *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 140.

First, the majority likened the severity of Watanabe’s allegations to *Carlson*, which involved the death of a chronically asthmatic inmate who was administered contra-indicated drugs and hooked up to a respirator that medical personnel knew to be broken. *Carlson*, 446 U.S.

at 16 n.1. Even if “Watanabe received less deficient care” than the inmate in *Carlson*, the majority reasoned, it was “not a meaningful difference” giving rise to a new *Bivens* context. *Watanabe*, 115 F.4th at 1042.

Second, and more important for our purposes, the majority held that Watanabe’s access to the ARP “does not render this case a new context.” *Id.* According to the majority, the Supreme Court “clarified” in *Egbert* that alternative remedies “can be one ‘special factor,’ to be considered at the *second* step of the *Bivens* analysis,” but not the first. *Id.* (emphasis in original) (citing *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 493, 498). All this considered, the majority held that Watanabe’s claim fell within an existing *Bivens* context, and thus “no further analysis [was] required.” *Id.* at 1043 (quoting *Lanuza v. Love*, 899 F.3d 1019, 1023 (9th Cir. 2018)).

Judge M. Smith dissented in part. Noting that the Supreme Court’s “understanding of a ‘new context’ is broad,” the dissent explained how dissimilarities in the degree of mistreatment and severity of medical need distinguished this case from *Carlson*. *Id.* at 1045-46 (M. Smith, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part) (quoting *Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 102). For example, Nielsen’s initial examination of Watanabe mostly revealed results “within normal limits.” *Id.* at 1045. Had Nielsen known of Watanabe’s broken coccyx and still refused to send him to a hospital, “this case would look closer to *Carlson*.” *Id.* But because Watanabe’s allegations were meaningfully different from those in *Carlson*, Judge M. Smith concluded that Watanabe’s claim landed outside the preexisting *Bivens* framework.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Watanabe conceded that he cannot prevail at *Bivens* step two. See Oral Arg. at 6:04-6:10. So the sole issue here was whether Watanabe’s claim presented a new *Bivens* context. Cf. *Lanuza*, 899 F.3d at 1023.

The question is a simple one: May courts consider alternative remedies at *Bivens* step one? Supreme Court precedent, decisions from other circuits, and our own *Bivens* case law show that the answer is a straightforward “yes.”

## A

Start with the Supreme Court’s decision in *Ziglar*. There, the Court considered whether *Bivens* covered the plaintiffs’ claim that the warden of a federal prison violated the Fifth Amendment through his deliberate indifference to alleged prisoner abuse. 582 U.S. at 146-47. The “first question” was whether the plaintiffs’ claim “arises in a new *Bivens* context.” *Id.* at 147. The Court noted “significant parallels” to *Carlson*. *Id.* But the Court recognized that a case can still “present a new context for *Bivens* purposes . . . if there are potential special factors that were not considered in previous *Bivens* cases.” *Id.* at 148.

What the Court said next dooms the majority’s alternative remedies holding. *Ziglar* concluded that the new context inquiry was satisfied, in part because the plaintiffs’ claim presented “certain features that were not considered in the Court’s previous *Bivens* cases and that might discourage a court from authorizing a *Bivens* remedy.” *Id.* One of those features was “the existence of alternative remedies.” *Id.* (“[T]here might have been alternative remedies available here, for example, a writ of habeas corpus; an injunction requiring the warden to bring his prison into compliance with [federal regulations]; or some other form of equitable relief.” (internal citations omitted)). The Court noted that the “differences between [the plaintiffs’] claim and the one in *Carlson* are perhaps small, at least in practical terms.” *Id.* at 149. But the new context inquiry was still “easily satisfied” because the differences identified—the availability of alternative remedies, among

others—were “meaningful ones.” *Id.* Having identified a new context, the Supreme Court left it to the lower courts on remand to decide whether to extend *Bivens* at step two to encompass the plaintiffs’ claim.<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

It follows from *Ziglar* that the majority’s cabining of alternative remedies to *Bivens*’ second step cannot be correct. By pointing to alternative remedies as an indication of a new *Bivens* context, *Ziglar* shows that such remedies are relevant at *both* steps of the *Bivens* analysis, not just the second.

Under that common-sense approach, Watanabe’s claim arises in a new *Bivens* context. Everyone agrees that his case is closest to *Carlson*. But *Carlson* did not consider the ARP. Why? Because the plaintiff—the administratrix of her deceased son’s estate—could not herself utilize the ARP as an alternative remedy against the prison officials alleged to have unconstitutionally caused her son’s death. *See* Bureau of Prisons, Control, Custody, Care, Treatment, and Instruction of Inmates, 44 Fed. Reg. 62,248, 62,250 (Oct. 29, 1979) (to be codified at 28 C.F.R. pts. 542, 544) (“This procedure applies to all inmates confined in Bureau of Prisons institutions . . . .”); *see also* *Fields v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 109 F.4th 264, 274 (4th Cir. 2024) (noting that an “inmate’s estate could not itself file a grievance through the ARP process”). *Carlson*, like *Bivens*, was a case of “damages or nothing.” *Bivens*, 403 U.S. at 410 (Harlan, J., concurring in the judgment). Put differently, an alternative remedy available to Watanabe was unavailable to the plaintiff in *Carlson*. If that is not a

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<sup>2</sup> According to the majority, *Ziglar*’s discussion of alternative remedies simply previewed how such remedies “might play” in a step two analysis. Statement at 81 n.2. I would take the Justices at their word: “[T]he Court declines to perform the [step two] special-factors analysis itself.” *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 149.

meaningful difference, then it's hard to say what is. *See Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139-40.

Consider too that *Carlson* did not evaluate alternative remedies as the Court does now. *See* Collins Dissent at 113-114, 116. In *Carlson*, the Court asked whether there were “alternative remed[ies] which [Congress] explicitly declared to be a *substitute* for recovery directly under the Constitution and viewed as equally effective,” and it concluded that the Federal Tort Claims Act did not meet that standard. 446 U.S. at 18-19 (emphasis in original). Today, we do not consider whether an alternative remedy is an effective substitute for a *Bivens* action. *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 498. The analysis is far simpler: “So long as Congress or the Executive has created a remedial process that it finds sufficient to secure an adequate level of deterrence, the courts cannot second-guess that calibration by superimposing a *Bivens* remedy.” *Id.* The Court’s shift in how it understands alternative remedies is critical. As *Egbert* made clear, “a plaintiff cannot justify a *Bivens* extension based on ‘parallel circumstances’ with *Bivens*, [Davis], or *Carlson* unless he also satisfies the ‘analytic framework’ prescribed by the last four decades of intervening case law.” *Id.* at 501 (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139). Because an alternative remedy was available to Watanabe, and because *Carlson* did not consider such remedies under the current framework, Watanabe’s case is meaningfully different from *Carlson*.

The majority offers two responses in its statement respecting the denial of rehearing en banc. First, it notes that an early form of the ARP existed when *Carlson* was decided in 1980. We are told that the ARP therefore cannot create a “new” context. Statement at 78. That, of course, is not the test. Under *Egbert*, “a new context arises when there are ‘potential special factors that

previous *Bivens* cases did not consider.’’ 596 U.S. at 492 (quoting *Ziglar*, 528 U.S. at 140) (emphasis added). For reasons explained, *Carlson* did not consider the ARP, even though the program existed when the case was decided.

Second, the majority maintains that the *Carlson* plaintiff’s inability to use the ARP is “irrelevant” because “Congressional or Executive policymaking informs the appropriateness of a judicial remedy.” Statement at 82. “Whether the alternative remedy affords adequate or substitute relief to the plaintiff is not relevant,” the majority says. Statement at 82. I agree with all of that. But not with what follows: “[T]o the extent that the ARP represents the Executive’s judgment about how prisoner complaints concerning their medical care should be addressed . . . the ARP was as relevant in *Carlson* as it is in *Watanabe*.” *Id.* The problem for the majority is that *Carlson*, unlike *Watanabe*, did not involve a prisoner complaint about his medical care. It involved a mother suing on behalf of her deceased son’s estate. And if the question is whether there is a single meaningful difference between *Carlson* and this case, the fact that the mother in *Carlson* could not use a remedy that was available to *Watanabe* easily meets that bar.

Putting aside the majority’s belated attempt to justify its holding, its actual opinion offered little reasoning for departing from *Ziglar* and its endorsement of considering alternative remedies at step one. The majority devoted one sentence to why it understood alternative remedies as relevant only at *Bivens* step two. To hear the majority tell it, *Egbert* “clarified” that alternative remedies can be one special factor “to be considered at the *second* step of the *Bivens* analysis.” *Watanabe*, 115 F.4th at 1042 (emphasis in original) (citing *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 493, 498). But *Egbert* did the opposite. The Court never said that alterna-

tive remedies cannot be considered at *Bivens* step one. Its entire step one analysis of the plaintiff's Fourth Amendment claim consisted of flagging the Ninth Circuit's concession that the claim "presented a new context for *Bivens* purposes." *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 494.

While the *Egbert* Court considered alternative remedies at step two in declining to extend the plaintiff's claim to a new context, nothing about that forecloses consideration of alternative remedies at step one as well. Just one meaningful difference is enough to create a new *Bivens* context. *See Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139; *see also Tate*, 54 F.4th at 846 ("The Supreme Court has instructed not only that 'new context' must be understood broadly but also that a new context may arise if *even one* distinguishing fact has the potential to implicate separation-of-powers considerations." (citing *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 494-96)). So the fact that a case does not discuss alternative remedies at step one, but does at step two once a new context has been identified, says nothing about whether such remedies are excluded from the new context analysis. The question is whether step one consideration of alternative remedies is affirmatively foreclosed. *Egbert* does not "clarif[y]" that courts must turn a blind eye to alternative remedies at *any* step of the *Bivens* analysis.<sup>3</sup> *Watanabe*, 115 F.4th at 1042 (citation omitted).

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<sup>3</sup> The majority asserted that even if it were to consider alternative remedies at step one, we have already held that a claim like Watanabe's does not present a new *Bivens* context, even though the prisoner had access to the ARP. *Watanabe*, 115 F.4th at 1042 (citing *Stanard v. Dy*, 88 F.4th 811, 814, 818 (9th Cir. 2023)). But *Stanard* never elaborated on whether the ARP points to a new *Bivens* context, likely because the defendant never made that argument. *See Webster v. Fall*, 266 U.S. 507, 511 (1925) ("Questions which merely lurk in the record, neither brought to the attention of the court nor ruled upon, are not to be considered as having been so decided as to constitute precedents.").

Indeed, *Egbert* held that the two steps, while doctrinally significant, are not theoretically distinct. *See Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 502 (Gorsuch, J., concurring in the judgment) (noting that the Court’s decision clarified the relationship between the first and second steps). Both “steps” are geared towards answering the same question: “[W]hether there is any reason to think that Congress might be better equipped to create a damages remedy.” *Id.* at 492 (maj. op.). It makes little sense, then, to say—as the majority’s statement does—that “special factors” means something different at step one versus step two. Statement at 79-81; *see Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 124 n.3 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting) (“differences material to a new-context determination,” including “the presence of potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider,” “overlap with the [step two] special-factors inquiry” (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 140)). Thus, nothing supports believing that alternative remedies are somehow relevant at the second step, but not the first.

Finally, *Egbert* confirmed the scope of the new context analysis. The Court has “never offered an ‘exhaustive’ accounting” of what makes a context new. *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492-93 (citation omitted). And it has not once suggested that certain factors are off limits. That is “because no court could forecast every factor that might counsel hesitation.” *Id.* at 493 (cleaned up). And in at least some cases, “uncertainty alone is a special factor that forecloses relief.” *Id.* Far from constricting step one, *Egbert* underscores its breadth.

The majority did violence to these principles. It first violated a core tenet of the *Bivens* analysis, concluding that because “Watanabe alleges he suffered deliberate medical indifference while incarcerated, in violation of the Eighth Amendment’s proscription against cruel and unusual punishment,” and because “*Carlson* dealt with the exact same issue,” the “district court thus erred in dismissing

Watanabe's Eighth Amendment claim." *Watanabe*, 115 F.4th at 1036. The Supreme Court forbids framing the new context question in this way. "A claim may arise in a new context even if it is based on the same constitutional provision as a claim in a case in which a damages remedy was previously recognized." *Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 103; *see also Tun-Cos v. Perrotte*, 922 F.3d 514, 524 (4th Cir. 2019) ("Arguing at so general a level . . . ignores the language of [Ziglar] . . ."). Courts cannot identify a preexisting *Bivens* context by simply pointing to the Eighth Amendment and noting that *Carlson* dealt with the same type of claim.

Instead, courts must look for meaningful differences between a proposed *Bivens* claim and the Court's previous *Bivens* cases. *See, e.g., Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139-40, 149. The majority did the opposite. It latched onto superficial similarities, downplaying the availability of alternative remedies and several other relevant distinctions. For instance, the majority concluded that differences in severity between Watanabe's claim and the claim in *Carlson* were irrelevant to the cognizability of a *Bivens* remedy. *Watanabe*, 115 F.4th at 1041-42. The Supreme Court, however, has suggested otherwise. *See Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 147 ("[T]he allegations of injury here are just as compelling as those at issue in *Carlson*.").

So have other circuits. The First Circuit recently affirmed the dismissal of an Eighth Amendment claim under *Bivens*, largely because the alleged mistreatment was meaningfully less severe than the mistreatment in *Carlson*. In *Waltermeyer v. Hazlewood*, a federal inmate alleged that he received inadequate medical treatment when a prison doctor declined his request for surgery to address chronic knee pain. 136 F.4th 361, 364-65 (1st Cir. 2025). Having been advised by an outside specialist who recommended deferring surgery, the doctor instead provided

non-surgical treatments, including cortisone injections and pain medication. *Id.*

The First Circuit held that the plaintiff's allegations were meaningfully different from *Carlson*. *Id.* at 366-67. Unlike in *Carlson*, where "several of the treatments administered were medically contraindicated," the plaintiff received treatment consistent with doctors' recommendations. *Id.* The court also reasoned that the plaintiff had not alleged "gross inadequacy of medical care," nor did his claim involve a "wrongful death-like action" as in *Carlson*. *Id.* These relative differences in severity created a new *Bivens* context.

The allegations in *Waltermeyer* are close to the allegations in *Watanabe*. Nielsen also consulted another medical provider before giving Watanabe an intramuscular injection and over-the-counter painkillers. And as in *Waltermeyer*, there is no evidence that Watanabe was given contraindicated treatment like the inmate in *Carlson*. If these differences were enough to create a new context in *Waltermeyer*, they are enough to create a new context here.

The First Circuit also rejected the argument—pressed by the *Watanabe* majority and the *Waltermeyer* dissent—that severity is a merits question with no effect on the availability of a *Bivens* cause of action. See Statement at 85; *Waltermeyer*, 136 F.4th at 371 (Breyer, J., dissenting).<sup>4</sup> The court distinguished the Seventh Circuit's decision in *Brooks v. Richardson*, 131 F.4th 613 (7th Cir. 2025), on which the *Watanabe* majority relies. The First Circuit majority explained that *Brooks* involved a total failure to treat a life-threatening medical condition, while the plain-

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<sup>4</sup> Justice Breyer sat by designation on the First Circuit panel.

tiff in *Waltermeyer* was given some treatment for his condition. 136 F.4th at 367 n.4. So too here.

Yet the *Watanabe* majority doubles down, proclaiming that *Waltermeyer* proves its point. Statement at 85. The majority recognizes that the First Circuit “found a new context because of the lesser severity of the alleged misconduct.” *Id.* But according to the majority, the First Circuit “observed that the alleged conduct was so minor that it did not constitute a violation of the Eighth Amendment at all.”<sup>5</sup> *Id.* *Waltermeyer*, the majority asserts, thus “stands for the proposition that allegations that do not establish a constitutional violation are not actionable under *Bivens*.” *Id.*

The explanation makes no sense. In the same breath, the majority argues that severity “merely inform[s] the merits of the constitutional violation,” while suggesting that allegations falling short of a substantive Eighth Amendment violation are not viable under *Bivens*. Statement at 78, 85. That is the exact reasoning the majority purports to reject: collapsing the merits into whether a *Bivens* cause of action exists. *See* Statement at 84-86 & n.4. The majority’s contradiction is a concession that severity bears on the cognizability of a *Bivens* remedy.

The First Circuit’s analysis tracks the views of other circuits that consider severity as part of the new context analysis. In *Johnson v. Terry*, the Eleventh Circuit found “a new context under the first-stage inquiry” because “[t]he severity, type, and treatment of [the plaintiff’s] injuries were different from those of the plaintiff in *Carl-*

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<sup>5</sup> The First Circuit said nothing about whether the plaintiff alleged an Eighth Amendment violation on the merits. *Cf. Waltermeyer*, 136 F.4th at 368 (“Recognizing a judicially created cause of action based on Waltermeyer’s allegations conflicts with the Court’s [*Bivens*] directive[s] . . .”).

*son.*” 119 F.4th 840, 859 (11th Cir. 2024). And in *Rowland v. Matevousian*, the Tenth Circuit pointed to the lack of allegations that prison officials “act[ed] contrary to the doctor’s recommendations,” gave “contra-indicated drugs,” or used medical equipment “known to be inoperative” as meaningful differences from *Carlson* giving rise to a new *Bivens* context. 121 F.4th 1237, 1243 (10th Cir. 2024) (quoting *Carlson*, 446 U.S. at 16 n.1). These decisions reject the majority’s conclusion that “receiv[ing] less deficient care than the inmate in *Carlson* . . . is not a meaningful difference.” *Watanabe*, 115 F.4th at 1041-42 (quoting *Stanard*, 88 F.4th at 817).

In sum, the majority focused on a handful of factual similarities, glossing over the meaningful differences between this case and *Carlson*. And it did so in violation of the Supreme Court’s clear instructions. The en banc court should have intervened to correct these fundamental errors.

## B

The majority’s alternative remedies holding also underscores a circuit split. At least two other circuits have held that the availability of alternative remedies—specifically the ARP—creates a new *Bivens* context. In *Johnson*, the Eleventh Circuit identified a new context in part because, “[a]s the [Supreme] Court found in *Ziglar*,” *Carlson* “did not consider whether there were alternative remedies under the current alternative remedy analysis.” 119 F.4th at 858 (citing *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 148). Because the plaintiff in *Johnson* could pursue an alternative remedy through the ARP, and “because the *Carlson* Court did not consider the existence of such remedies under the Supreme Court’s current analytical framework,” the Eleventh Circuit concluded that the plaintiff’s claim arose in a new *Bivens* context. *Id.* at 858-59. The Eleventh Circuit got it right.

So did the Third Circuit. *Kalu v. Spaulding* rejected a prisoner's attempt to extend *Bivens* to cover his claim that a prison guard violated his Eighth Amendment rights by sexually assaulting him several times. 113 F.4th 311, 327 (3d Cir. 2024). The prisoner's claim "present[ed] 'features that were not considered' by the Supreme Court when deciding *Carlson*." *Id.* (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 148). *Carlson* bore "little resemblance" to the prisoner's case, because *Carlson* never considered the ARP, which "provides inmates with an alternative avenue for relief." *Id.* at 328. The Third Circuit concluded that the ARP, as a "feature[] that [was] not considered" in *Carlson*, presented an additional reason to conclude that the prisoner's claim arose in a new context. *Id.* (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 148).

Still more circuits recognize that special factors—like alternative remedies—"play a part in both steps of the *Bivens* inquiry." *Sargeant v. Barfield*, 87 F.4th 358, 366 (7th Cir. 2023); *see also id.* ("At the first step, we ask whether the claim arises in a new context . . . while searching for special factors that earlier *Bivens* cases did not consider and giving special solicitude to . . . separation-of-powers concerns." (cleaned up)). That makes sense given the "overlap between the factors courts are to consider when determining whether a purported *Bivens* claim arose out of a 'new context' and whether special factors counsel hesitation for any extension of *Bivens*." *Bulger v. Hurwitz*, 62 F.4th 127, 140 (4th Cir. 2023) (citing *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 491-92); *see Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 124 n.3 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting) (same). Those cases are right. It makes little sense to limit certain kinds of "special factors" to *Bivens* step two, when the Supreme Court has been clear that a new context arises "when there are 'potential special factors that previous *Bivens* cases did not consider.'" *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492 (quoting *Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 140).

It should come as no surprise that other circuits consider alternative remedies as part of the new context inquiry. The Supreme Court does. *See Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 147-49; *see also Snowden v. Henning*, 72 F.4th 237, 242 (7th Cir. 2023) (“The [Supreme] Court held [in *Ziglar*] that the case represented an extension of *Bivens* to a new context” because “alternative remedies might have been available.”). And the Court continues to emphasize that special factors—which include alternative remedies—are a necessary consideration at *Bivens* step one. *See Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 492. The majority ignored that guidance and held that alternative remedies are only considered at step two. That was a mistake.

The majority’s statement shifts the discussion to friendlier territory, citing cases from other circuits—some unpublished—that upheld *Carlson*-like claims. *See Statement* at 87-88. No one can dispute that courts have approved such claims, even after the Supreme Court’s decisions in *Ziglar* and *Egbert*.<sup>6</sup> *See, e.g., Brooks*, 131 F.4th at 615. After all, the Supreme Court has never expressly overruled *Carlson*, leaving some narrow, undefined area in which it may support a *Bivens* remedy. As Judge Collins explains, this case is an opportunity for the Court to clarify what, if anything, remains of *Carlson* under the current *Bivens* framework. Collins Dissent at 112, 116. And as the majority’s statement only

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<sup>6</sup> The majority relies on cases from the Sixth Circuit, which has “questioned the [ARP’s] adequacy as a *Bivens* alternative.” *Callahan v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 965 F.3d 520, 525 (6th Cir. 2020); *see Koprowski v. Baker*, 822 F.3d 248, 256-57 (6th Cir. 2016) (“[T]he ARP does not displace a *Bivens* remedy because it is not an effective substitute for a money-damages action.”). Those cases predate *Egbert*, which made clear that the *Bivens* analysis does not concern itself with the adequacy or effectiveness of an alternative remedy. 596 U.S. at 497-98. But even the Sixth Circuit’s cases—wrong as they are—do not hold that alternative remedies can be considered only at *Bivens* step two.

highlights, there are multiple entrenched *Carlson*-related circuit splits that deserve the Court’s attention.

But I want to be clear. Considering alternative remedies—specifically the ARP—as part of the new context analysis does not “effectively overrule” *Carlson*. Statement at 89. Taking the Supreme Court at its word, *Carlson* can still support a *Bivens* claim on its facts: a wrongful death case where the remedy is “damages or nothing.” *Bivens*, 403 U.S. at 410 (Harlan, J., concurring in the judgment); *see Waltermeyer*, 136 F.4th at 367 (new context where the claim “does not involve a wrongful death-like action”). But when a plaintiff can use the ARP—an option not considered in *Carlson*—Supreme Court precedent dictates that a *Bivens* cause of action is unavailable. That should come as no surprise, considering the Court has not approved an Eighth Amendment *Bivens* claim in the 45 years since *Carlson*. If one thing is clear about the Court’s view of *Bivens*, it is that we should think twice before extending this “dubious authority” beyond its original facts. *See Garza v. Idaho*, 586 U.S. 232, 264 (2019) (Thomas, J., dissenting); *see also Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 502 (“[I]f we were called to decide *Bivens* today, we would decline to discover any implied causes of action in the Constitution.”). The majority would have been wise to heed this guidance.

## C

The majority also defied our circuit precedent. Two years ago, we held that where a “case involves an alternative remedial structure, [it] exists in a novel context outside the preexisting *Bivens* framework.” *Harper*, 71 F.4th at 1187. David Harper, a former ranger with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), challenged adverse employment actions taken against him by the Department of the Interior (DOI) and BLM officials. *Id.* at 1183. He alleged that the officials violated his Fifth Amendment right to due process and

sought damages under *Bivens*. *Id.* at 1184. A key concern was whether Harper's claim was meaningfully different from *Davis*, the due process case where the Supreme Court recognized a *Bivens* cause of action for sex discrimination against a former congressional staffer. *Id.* at 1185, 1187; *see Davis*, 442 U.S. at 248-49.

Applying the two steps, we held that Harper's claim arose in a "meaningfully different context than past *Bivens* cases." 71 F.4th at 1186. We reached that conclusion in part because Harper, unlike the plaintiff in *Davis*, could pursue alternative remedies. *Id.* at 1187. The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA) created procedures by which federal employees like Harper may challenge adverse employment actions. *Id.* Those actions can typically be appealed to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), with federal judicial review as another backstop. *Id.* (citing 5 U.S.C. §§ 7512, 7513(d), 7703(b)(1)). And should an employment action fall outside of MSPB jurisdiction, then an employee can capitalize on DOI's "own internal grievance procedures." *Id.* Much of *Harper*'s new context holding relied on these alternative remedies. And we said so: "Because this case involves an alternative remedial structure, this case exists in a novel context outside the preexisting *Bivens* framework." *Id.*

If you look for this language in *Watanabe*, you will not find it. There is no reference to *Harper* at all. The majority shunned *Harper* and its alternative remedies holding, even though the case was cited in *Watanabe*'s reply brief and in Judge M. Smith's dissent. Indeed, the majority's statement is the first time it has said anything about *Harper*. Apparently, *Harper* was right to consider alternative remedies at step one because the CSRA was "inextricable" from the alleged constitutional violation. Statement at 83. Alternative remedies, according to the majority's overdue

reading of *Harper*, can be a step one consideration if they are “part and parcel” with the alleged violation. *Id.* at 84. *Harper* says nothing of the majority’s narrow rule—that alternative remedies come in at step one only if they are “inextricable from the alleged constitutional violation.” *Id.*; *see Harper*, 71 F.4th at 1187. Nor does the majority identify a single case supporting its post-hoc rationalization for ignoring circuit precedent.

Instead, the majority struck out on its own, deriving its one-of-a-kind rule from *Egbert* that alternative remedies are considered only “at the *second* step of the *Bivens* analysis.” *Watanabe*, 115 F.4th at 1042 (emphasis in original). The majority’s holding has no basis in our precedent—or that of any other court. Our intra-circuit conflict should have been corrected en banc. *See* Collins Dissent at 111.

### III

The majority ignored the Supreme Court’s “barely implicit” instruction: new *Bivens* claims are fated to fail. *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 504 (Gorsuch, J., concurring in the judgment). But it went even further and fueled a circuit split, while closing its eyes to our contrary precedent. I dissent.

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COLLINS, Circuit Judge, dissenting from the denial of rehearing en banc:

I agree with Judge Nelson that we should have taken this case en banc. As he notes, there is internal confusion within our caselaw over the role of alternative remedies in determining whether a damages claim is available under *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971). *See* R. Nelson Dissent at 109-111 (discussing *Harper v. Nedd*, 71 F.4th 1181 (9th Cir. 2023)). Moreover, with respect to the role of alternative remedies in the *Bivens* analysis, the panel here per-

sisted in applying a relatively rigid “two step” *Bivens* analysis (under which it confined consideration of such remedies to step two), and it did so even though the Supreme Court’s most recent *Bivens* case squarely held that “those steps often resolve to a single question: whether there is any reason to think that Congress might be better equipped to create a damages remedy.” *Egbert v. Boule*, 596 U.S. 482, 492 (2022); *see also id.* at 502-03 (Gorsuch, J., concurring in the judgment) (noting that the Court “recognizes that [its] two-step inquiry really boils down to a ‘single question’”). These considerations, in my view, were sufficient to warrant en banc rehearing, which would have allowed us to clarify our *Bivens* precedent in a way that is more faithful to the Supreme Court’s caselaw.

I concede, however, that there is a limit to how much clarity we would ultimately have been able to provide, even sitting en banc. That is because, it seems to me, there is a substantial degree of internal doctrinal tension within the Supreme Court’s current *Bivens* caselaw, and that tension appears to be particularly pronounced in the context of the sort of Eighth Amendment inadequate-prisoner-medical-care claim at issue here. Perhaps this case may provide a suitable opportunity for the Court to provide a greater degree of clarity than we could ever have done in this area.

The primary difficulty here arises from the considerable tension between the Supreme Court’s never-explicitly-overruled decision in *Carlson v. Green*, 446 U.S. 14 (1980), and nearly everything else the Court has said about the scope of *Bivens* over the last many years. In *Carlson*, the Court recognized an implied damages remedy against federal officials for a claim asserted by a prisoner’s estate alleging that, in violation of the Eighth Amendment, the defendant officials provided the prisoner with inadequate medical care that reflected their “deliberate[] indiffer-

en[ce] to [his] serious medical needs.” *Id.* at 16 & n.1. However, essentially all of the reasoning on which the decision in *Carlson* rested has been explicitly repudiated in subsequent Supreme Court decisions, and, in addition, those decisions have created significant uncertainty as to the proper scope of what remains of an Eighth Amendment damages remedy under *Carlson*.

In considering whether to recognize the Eighth Amendment *Bivens* action asserted in *Carlson*, the Court started from the broadly framed premise that “*Bivens* established that the victims of a constitutional violation by a federal agent have a right to recover damages against the official in federal court despite the absence of any statute conferring such a right.” *Carlson*, 446 U.S. at 18. The Court stated, however, that this general rule could be “defeated” in either of “two situations”: (1) “when defendants demonstrate ‘special factors counselling hesitation in the absence of affirmative action by Congress’”; or (2) “when defendants show that Congress has provided an alternative remedy which it explicitly declared to be a *substitute* for recovery directly under the Constitution and viewed as equally effective.” *Id.* at 18-19 (citation omitted).

This analysis bears no resemblance to the current general standards governing *Bivens* causes of action. In contrast to *Carlson*’s starting rule that a *Bivens* cause of action presumptively exists against federal officials for constitutional violations (subject to two exceptions), the Court’s current *Bivens* caselaw starts from the opposite presumption. As the Court stated in its most recent *Bivens* case, “recognizing a cause of action under *Bivens* is a *disfavored* judicial activity,” because, “[a]t bottom, creating a cause of action is a legislative endeavor.” *Egbert*, 596 U.S. at 491 (emphasis added) (simplified). The Court has also expressly rejected *Carlson*’s statement that a *Bivens* remedy is foreclosed by an

“alternative remedy” only if Congress has “explicitly declared [it] to be a *substitute*” for that remedy. *Id.* at 501 (quoting *Carlson*, 446 U.S. at 18-19). Indeed, the Court has “indicated that if [it] were called to decide *Bivens* today, [it] would decline to discover *any* implied causes of action in the Constitution.” *Id.* at 502 (emphasis added). Put simply, both the reasoning and the result in *Carlson* are inconsistent with the “analytic framework” the Court has “prescribed” over “the last four decades of intervening case law.” *Id.* at 501 (simplified).

The Supreme Court has stated, however, that “[i]f a precedent of th[e] Court has direct application in a case, yet appears to rest on reasons rejected in some other line of decisions, the Court of Appeals should follow the case which directly controls, leaving to th[e] Court the prerogative of overruling its own decisions.” *Rodriguez de Quijas v. Shearson/Am. Express, Inc.*, 490 U.S. 477, 484 (1989). But the challenge in this context is trying to ascertain when it can be said that *Carlson* “has direct application in a case.”

In that regard, it is not enough that a prisoner asserts a claim of inadequate medical care under the Eighth Amendment, because the Court has made clear that the scope of a previously recognized *Bivens* remedy cannot be described with that measure of categorical breadth. *See Hernandez v. Mesa*, 589 U.S. 93, 103 (2020) (“A claim may arise in a new context even if it is based on the same constitutional provision as a claim in a case in which a damages remedy was previously recognized.”). Thus, although *Bivens* itself involved several alleged Fourth Amendment violations, including one for use of excessive force, *see* 403 U.S. at 389, the Court has twice rejected particular *Bivens* Fourth Amendment excessive force claims that it deemed to arise in different contexts from *Bivens*. *See Egbert*, 596 U.S. at

494-98 (declining to recognize a *Bivens* Fourth Amendment excessive force claim due to the “national security” concerns presented by the case and the availability of alternative remedies); *Hernandez*, 589 U.S. at 103-13 (same, due to foreign affairs concerns, national security concerns, and “what Congress has done in statutes addressing related matters”). And, with respect to *Carlson* itself, the Court declined to recognize an implied damages action for an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim against a corporation managing a halfway house under federal contract, because the corporate liability context presented different considerations and because there were a variety of alternative “effective remedies.” *See Correctional Servs. Corp. v. Malesko*, 534 U.S. 61, 70-74 (2001); *see also Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 582 U.S. 120, 138-39 (2017) (noting that, in *Malesko*, “the right at issue” and the “mechanism of injury” were the same as in *Carlson*, but that the *Malesko* Court nonetheless declined to allow the *Bivens* claim to proceed).

But if it is not enough that, like *Carlson*, this case involves an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim of inadequate medical treatment, when exactly does *Carlson* have “direct application in a case,” such that we must apply *Carlson*, notwithstanding the wholesale evisceration of *Carlson*’s reasoning in the Court’s subsequent caselaw? The Court has told us that *Carlson* does not apply if there is a “meaningful” difference between the context of *Carlson* and the claim at hand. *See Ziglar*, 582 U.S. at 139-40. A meaningful difference is present, *inter alia*, “if there are potential special factors that were not considered in previous *Bivens* cases,” and such special factors (which have not been exhaustively defined) include “the existence of alternative remedies.” *Id.* at 148. But if we apply this test faithfully, it is hard to see what is left of *Carlson*’s damages action. *Carlson* considered *one* alternative remedy (the Fed-

eral Tort Claims Act), but it considered that remedy's significance for a *Bivens* action under standards the Court has since rejected, and it failed to consider many other alternative remedies that the Court has since stated may create a special context that would preclude a *Bivens* claim. The fact that *Carlson* did not consider these other alternative remedies would seem to present a new context that defeats a *Bivens* claim, but if that contention is taken to its logical conclusion, it would hollow out *Carlson* to such a degree that there would be little, if anything, left to it.

We are thus presented with a situation in which the Supreme Court has rejected all of the premises on which *Carlson* was based; it has instructed us that the contours of what remains of *Carlson*'s cause of action are to be evaluated under the Court's *current* standards; and those standards, if faithfully applied, would seemingly finish off *Carlson* entirely. Against this backdrop, trying to discern when the largely gutted decision in *Carlson* has "direct application in a case," and remains controlling under *Rodriguez de Quijas*, 490 U.S. at 484, is a challenging endeavor. Perhaps this case will provide an opportunity for the Court to provide some greater clarity as to what, if anything, is left of *Carlson*.

**APPENDIX F****RELEVANT CONSTITUTIONAL, STATUTORY,  
AND REGULATORY PROVISIONS**

1. The United States Constitution, Amendment VIII provides:

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

2. 18 U.S.C. §3626 provides in relevant part as follows:

**Appropriate remedies with respect to prison conditions****(a) REQUIREMENTS FOR RELIEF.—**

(1) PROSPECTIVE RELIEF.—(A) Prospective relief in any civil action with respect to prison conditions shall extend no further than necessary to correct the violation of the Federal right of a particular plaintiff or plaintiffs. The court shall not grant or approve any prospective relief unless the court finds that such relief is narrowly drawn, extends no further than necessary to correct the violation of the Federal right, and is the least intrusive means necessary to correct the violation of the Federal right. The court shall give substantial weight to any adverse impact on public safety or the operation of a criminal justice system caused by the relief.

\* \* \* \* \*

**(b) TERMINATION OF RELIEF.—**

(1) TERMINATION OF PROSPECTIVE RELIEF.—(A) In any civil action with respect to prison conditions in which prospective relief is ordered, such relief shall be terminable upon the motion of any party or intervenor—

- (i) 2 years after the date the court granted or approved the prospective relief;
- (ii) 1 year after the date the court has entered an order denying termination of prospective relief under this paragraph; or
- (iii) in the case of an order issued on or before the date of enactment of the Prison Litigation Reform Act, 2 years after such date of enactment.

\* \* \* \* \*

(e) PROCEDURE FOR MOTIONS AFFECTING PROSPECTIVE RELIEF.—

- (1) GENERALLY.—The court shall promptly rule on any motion to modify or terminate prospective relief in a civil action with respect to prison conditions. Mandamus shall lie to remedy any failure to issue a prompt ruling on such a motion.
- (2) AUTOMATIC STAY.—Any motion to modify or terminate prospective relief made under subsection (b) shall operate as a stay during the period—
  - (A)(i) beginning on the 30th day after such motion is filed, in the case of a motion made under paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection (b); or
  - (ii) beginning on the 180th day after such motion is filed, in the case of a motion made under any other law; and
- (B) ending on the date the court enters a final order ruling on the motion.
- (3) POSTPONEMENT OF AUTOMATIC STAY.—The court may postpone the effective date of an automatic stay specified in subsection (e)(2)(A) for not more than 60 days for good cause. No postponement shall be permis-

sible because of general congestion of the court's calendar.

(4) ORDER BLOCKING THE AUTOMATIC STAY.—Any order staying, suspending, delaying, or barring the operation of the automatic stay described in paragraph (2) (other than an order to postpone the effective date of the automatic stay under paragraph (3)) shall be treated as an order refusing to dissolve or modify an injunction and shall be appealable pursuant to section 1292(a)(1) of title 28, United States Code, regardless of how the order is styled or whether the order is termed a preliminary or a final ruling.

\* \* \* \* \*

3. 42 U.S.C. §1997e provides in relevant part as follows:

**Suits by prisoners**

**(a) Applicability of administrative remedies**

No action shall be brought with respect to prison conditions under section 1983 of this title, or any other Federal law, by a prisoner confined in any jail, prison, or other correctional facility until such administrative remedies as are available are exhausted.

\* \* \* \* \*

4. The Bureau of Prison's Administrative Remedy Program, 28 C.F.R. §§542.10-542.19, provides in relevant part as follows:

**§ 542.10 Purpose and scope.**

(a) *Purpose.* The purpose of the Administrative Remedy Program is to allow an inmate to seek formal review of an issue relating to any aspect of his/her own

## 120a

confinement. An inmate may not submit a Request or Appeal on behalf of another inmate.

(b) *Scope.* This Program applies to all inmates in institutions operated by the Bureau of Prisons, to inmates designated to contract Community Corrections Centers (CCCs) under Bureau of Prisons responsibility, and to former inmates for issues that arose during their confinement. This Program does not apply to inmates confined in other non-federal facilities.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **§ 542.13 Informal resolution.**

(a) *Informal resolution.* Except as provided in § 542.13 (b), an inmate shall first present an issue of concern informally to staff, and staff shall attempt to informally resolve the issue before an inmate submits a Request for Administrative Remedy. Each Warden shall establish procedures to allow for the informal resolution of inmate complaints.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **§ 542.14 Initial filing.**

(a) *Submission.* The deadline for completion of informal resolution and submission of a formal written Administrative Remedy Request, on the appropriate form (BP-9), is 20 calendar days following the date on which the basis for the Request occurred.

\* \* \* \* \*

(c) *Form.* (1) The inmate shall obtain the appropriate form from CCC staff or institution staff (ordinarily, the correctional counselor).

\* \* \* \* \*

**§ 542.15 Appeals.**

(a) *Submission.* An inmate who is not satisfied with the Warden's response may submit an Appeal on the appropriate form (BP-10) to the appropriate Regional Director within 20 calendar days of the date the Warden signed the response. An inmate who is not satisfied with the Regional Director's response may submit an Appeal on the appropriate form (BP-11) to the General Counsel within 30 calendar days of the date the Regional Director signed the response. When the inmate demonstrates a valid reason for delay, these time limits may be extended. Valid reasons for delay include those situations described in § 542.14(b) of this part. Appeal to the General Counsel is the final administrative appeal.

(b) *Form.* (1) Appeals to the Regional Director shall be submitted on the form designed for regional Appeals (BP-10) and accompanied by one complete copy or duplicate original of the institution Request and response. Appeals to the General Counsel shall be submitted on the form designed for Central Office Appeals (BP-11) and accompanied by one complete copy or duplicate original of the institution and regional filings and their responses. Appeals shall state specifically the reason for appeal.

\* \* \* \* \*

**APPENDIX G****POST-EGBERT ALTERNATIVE-REMEDIES AND  
SEVERITY CASES****Court of Appeals Decisions**

1. *Schwartz v. Miller*, No. 23-1343, 2025 WL 2473008, at \*6-8 (9th Cir. Aug. 28, 2025) (published opinion) (alternative remedies and severity).
2. *Sigalovskaya v. Braden*, 149 F.4th 226, 236 (2d Cir. 2025) (Perez, J, concurring) (alternative remedies).
3. *Arias v. Herzon*, No. 23-1618, 2025 WL 2374594, at \*11-12 (1st Cir. Aug. 15, 2025) (published opinion) (alternative remedies).
4. *Muniz v. United States*, 149 F.4th 256, 262-264 (3d Cir. 2025) (alternative remedies and severity).
5. *Watkins v. Mohan*, No. 24-1151, 2025 WL 1947500, at \*1-2 (7th Cir. July 16, 2025) (severity).
6. *Kaneakua v. Derr*, No. 23-1587, 2025 WL 1924889, at \*1 (9th Cir. July 14, 2025) (severity).
7. *Walker v. Hudson*, No. 24-3148, 2025 WL 1577808, at \*1-2 (10th Cir. June 4, 2025) (severity).
8. *Waltermeyer v. Hazlewood*, 136 F.4th 361, 364-367 (1st Cir. 2025) (severity).
9. *Brooks v. Richardson*, 131 F.4th 613, 614-615 (7th Cir. 2025) (severity).
10. *Hernandez v. Causey*, 124 F.4th 325, 329-330, 334 (5th Cir. 2024), cert. denied, 145 S. Ct. 1930 (2025) (alternative remedies).
11. *Rowland v. Matevousian*, 121 F.4th 1237, 1243 (10th Cir. 2024) (severity).
12. *Ward v. Enigk*, No. 23-2958, 2024 WL 4524171, at \*2 (3d Cir. Oct. 18, 2024) (severity).

13. *Johnson v. Terry*, 119 F.4th 840, 858-859 (11th Cir. 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
14. *Kalu v. Spaulding*, 113 F.4th 311, 327 (3d Cir. 2024) (alternative remedies).
15. *Hurst v. Derr*, No. 23-15523, 2024 WL 3842097, at \*1-2 (9th Cir. Aug. 16, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
16. *Vaughn v. Bassett*, No. 22-10962, 2024 WL 2891897, at \*1, 3-4 (5th Cir. June 10, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
17. *Wimberly v. Selent*, No. 23-13550, 2024 WL 2845476, at \*3-4 (11th Cir. June 5, 2024) (alternative remedies).
18. *Logsdon v. United States Marshal Serv.*, 91 F.4th 1352, 1359 (10th Cir. 2024) (alternative remedies).
19. *Hayes v. Doe*, No. 23-1330, 2024 WL 260521, at \*3-4 (10th Cir. Jan. 24, 2024) (alternative remedies).
20. *Cross v. Buschman*, No. 22-3194, 2024 WL 3292756, at \*3 (3d Cir. July 3, 2024) (Matey, J., concurring) (alternative remedies).
21. *Noe v. United States*, No. 23-1025, 2023 WL 8868491, at \*3 (10th Cir. Dec. 22, 2023), cert. denied, *Noe v. Berkley*, 144 S. Ct. 2562 (2024) (alternative remedies).
22. *Lewis v. Bartosh*, No. 22-3060-PR, 2023 WL 8613873, at \*1-2 (2d Cir. Dec. 13, 2023) (alternative remedies).
23. *Stanard v. Dy*, 88 F.4th 811, 817-818 (9th Cir. 2023) (severity).
24. *Sargeant v. Barfield*, 87 F.4th 358, 366-367 (7th Cir. 2023), cert. denied, 145 S. Ct. 285 (2024) (alternative remedies).
25. *Harper v. Nedd*, 71 F.4th 1181, 1187 (9th Cir. 2023)

(alternative remedies).

26. *Masias v. Hodges*, No. 21-6591, 2023 WL 2610230, at \*1-2 (4th Cir. Mar. 23, 2023) (severity).
27. *Silva v. United States*, 45 F.4th 1134, 1142 (10th Cir. 2022) (alternative remedies).

### **District Court Decisions**

1. *Mattox v. United States*, No. 7:24-cv-74, 2025 WL 2524845, at \*8-10 (E.D. Ky. Sept. 2, 2025) (alternative remedies and severity).
2. *Waldron v. Streeval*, No. 7:24-cv-324, 2025 WL 2233684, at \*6-7 (W.D. Va. Aug. 5, 2025) (alternative remedies and severity).
3. *Young v. Williams*, No. 22-cv-125, 2025 WL 2200735, at \*7 (S.D. Cal. Aug. 1, 2025) (severity).
4. *Farner v. Conlon*, No. 23-cv-1767, 2025 WL 2174451, at \*6 (N.D. Ill. July 31, 2025) (severity).
5. *Carthen v. Lafave*, No. 7:22-cv-201, 2025 WL 1870929, at \*4-5 (W.D. Va. July 7, 2025) (alternative remedies and severity).
6. *Nixon v. United States*, No. 3:25-cv-488, 2025 WL 1019073, at \*4 (M.D. Pa. Apr. 4, 2025) (severity).
7. *Carrin v. Smiledge*, 773 F. Supp. 3d 1284, 1291-1293 (N.D. Fla. 2025) (alternative remedies and severity).
8. *Hill v. Tatum*, No. 1:17-cv-4070, 2025 WL 918863, at \*5-6 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 26, 2025) (severity).
9. *Gayle v. Mowatt*, No. 1:23-cv-861, 2025 WL 903832, at \*15-16 (M.D. Pa. Mar. 25, 2025) (alternative remedies and severity).
10. *Tomes v. Nash*, No. 1:22-cv-1140, 2025 WL 942615, at \*4 (N.D. Ala. Feb. 21, 2025), report and recommen-

dation adopted, 2025 WL 942472 (Mar. 27, 2025) (alternative remedies and severity).

11. *Skinner v. Obi-Okoye*, No. 2:23-cv-34, 2025 WL 850149, at \*7 (E.D. Ark. Feb. 19, 2025), report and recommendation adopted, 2025 WL 849187 (Mar. 18, 2025) (severity).
12. *Kent v. Oge*, No. 3:24-cv-526, 2025 WL 588336, at \*4 (N.D. Fla. Feb. 12, 2025), report and recommendation adopted, 2025 WL 588996 (Feb. 24, 2025) (alternative remedies and severity).
13. *Singletary v. Conroy*, No. 24-cv-145, 2025 WL 460924, at \*7 (D. Colo. Feb. 11, 2025), report and recommendation adopted, 2025 WL 706003 (Mar. 5, 2025) (severity).
14. *Walker v. United States*, No. 3:23-cv-220, 2025 WL 1159971, at \*9 (W.D. Pa. Feb. 10, 2025), report and recommendation adopted, 2025 WL 1303867 (May 6, 2025) (severity).
15. *Mouzon v. United States*, No. 23-cv-10911, 2025 WL 35009, at \*5 (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 6, 2025) (severity).
16. *Johnson v. Jansen*, No. 9:23-cv-2537, 2024 WL 5515153, at \*6-7 (D.S.C. Dec. 5, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2025 WL 1081006 (Apr. 10, 2025) (severity).
17. *Irvin v. Garrett*, No. 2:24-cv-146, 2024 WL 4859069, at \*4 (E.D. Ark. Nov. 21, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2025 WL 1650027 (June 10, 2025) (severity).
18. *Haar v. Mattos*, No. 22-cv-04827, 2024 WL 5717975, at \*5-6 (C.D. Cal. Oct. 3, 2024), report and recommendation vacated, 2024 WL 5717970 (C.D. Cal. Oct. 25, 2024) (severity).

19. *Blackmon v. United States*, No. 5:22-cv-581, 2024 WL 5264711, at \*4-5 (M.D. Fla. Sept. 20, 2024) (severity).
20. *McBride v. Laurie*, No. 24-cv-4178, 2024 WL 4254097, at \*6 (E.D. Pa. Sept. 20, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
21. *Crumble v. United States*, No. 1:23-cv-1342, 2024 WL 4173791, at \*13-14 (M.D. Pa. Sept. 12, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
22. *Black v. Thompson*, No. 2:21-cv-2167, 2024 WL 4013020, at \*2-4 (E.D. Cal. Aug. 30, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, *Black v. Allred*, 2024 WL 4289872 (Sept. 25, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
23. *Freeman v. Zilliox*, No. 22-cv-97, 2024 WL 4609860, at \*5 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 19, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 4604386 (Oct. 29, 2024) (severity).
24. *Harrison v. Birtwell*, No. 2:24-cv-1413, 2024 WL 3674853, at \*4 (E.D. Cal. Aug. 5, 2024) (severity).
25. *Eads v. United States*, No. 21-cv-17369, 2024 WL 278720, at \*6 (D.N.J. Jan. 25, 2024) (severity).
26. *Toro v. Asao*, No. 20-cv-2282, 2024 WL 3548893, at \*5-6 (D.N.J. July 24, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
27. *Yaeger v. Song*, No. 22-cv-5056, 2024 WL 3064673, at \*3 (D.N.J. June 20, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
28. *Garcia v. Barnes*, No. 9:23-cv-1877, 2024 WL 3403051, at \*7 (D.S.C. June 13, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 3400911 (July 12, 2024) (severity).

29. *Cicchiello v. Slinka*, No. 3:23-cv-88, 2024 WL 3418186, at \*14 (N.D.W. Va. May 22, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 3416516 (July 15, 2024) (severity).
30. *Nasiruddin v. Pliler*, No. 21-cv-7044, 2024 WL 2262664, at \*8-9 (S.D.N.Y. May 17, 2024) (severity).
31. *Ortiz v. United States*, No. 1:23-cv-203, 2024 WL 1620790, at \*12-13 (M.D. Pa. Apr. 15, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
32. *Decker v. United States*, No. 2:23-cv-65, 2024 WL 1477858, at \*2 (S.D. Ind. Apr. 2, 2024) (severity).
33. *Fiorito v. Anderson*, No. 5:18-cv-506, 2024 WL 2107332, at \*13-14 (C.D. Cal. Mar. 28, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 3030091 (June 17, 2024), opinion vacated on reconsideration, 2024 WL 3915199 (July 24, 2024) (severity).
34. *Spivey v. Breckon*, No. 7:20-cv-400, 2024 WL 1184445, at \*7 (W.D. Va. Mar. 18, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
35. *Jennings v. Poynor*, No. 2:22-cv-47, 2024 WL 1421348, at \*4-5 (E.D. Ark. Mar. 6, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 1414693 (Apr. 2, 2024) (severity).
36. *Sides v. Hosseini*, No. 2:22-cv-8334, 2024 WL 2867802, at \*14-15 (C.D. Cal. Mar. 6, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 2864687 (June 6, 2024) (severity).
37. *Kaid v. Tatum*, No. 20-cv-3643, 2024 WL 946949, at \*11 (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 24, 2024), report and recommendation adopted as modified, 2024 WL 639331 (Feb. 15, 2024) (severity).

38. *Morgan v. Watson*, No. 2:23-cv-1473, 2024 WL 1601259, at \*5 (C.D. Cal. Feb. 2, 2024) (severity).
39. *Natt v. United States*, No. 1:23-cv-4365, 2024 WL 6085348, at \*4 (N.D. Ga. Jan. 25, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, *Natt v. Prison Offs.*, 2024 WL 6085342 (May 2, 2024) (alternative remedies and severity).
40. *Carter v. United States*, No. 22-cv-6715, 2024 WL 1345313, at \*12-13 (E.D.N.Y. Mar. 29, 2024) (alternative remedies)
41. *Wiley v. Fernandez*, No. 9:19-cv-652, 2024 WL 779392, at \*6 (N.D.N.Y. Jan. 19, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 939224 (Mar. 5, 2024) (severity).
42. *Bluford v. Hendrix*, No. 3:22-cv-1005, 2024 WL 36600, at \*5-6 (D. Or. Jan. 3, 2024) (severity).
43. *Johnston v. United States*, No. 1:23-cv-53, 2024 WL 35439, at \*4-5 (S.D.W. Va. Jan. 3, 2024) (severity).
44. *Jones v. United States*, No. 22-cv-2854, 2024 WL 365003, at \*5 (D. Colo. Jan. 3, 2024), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 358098 (Jan. 31, 2024) (severity).
45. *Hill v. Wade*, No. 20-cv-3658, 2023 WL 9375475, at \*4 (D. Colo. Dec. 27, 2023), report and recommendation adopted, 2024 WL 249099 (Jan. 23, 2024) (severity).
46. *Werman v. Joyner*, No. 22-cv-71, 2023 WL 5537900, at \*7 (E.D. Ky. Aug. 28, 2023) (severity).
47. *Brooks v. Foreman*, No. 3:20-cv-599, 2023 WL 11228264, at \*3-4 (S.D. Miss. Aug. 24, 2023) (severity).
48. *Bravo v. U.S. Marshals Serv.*, 684 F. Supp. 3d 112, 125 (S.D.N.Y. 2023) (severity).

49. *Hernandez v. Cnty. of Los Angeles*, No. 2:20-cv-3869, 2023 WL 5917422, at \*8 (C.D. Cal. July 19, 2023), report and recommendation adopted, 2023 WL 5916446 (Sept. 11, 2023) (severity).
50. *Bettis v. Grijalva*, No. 21-cv-7505, 2023 WL 4141869, at \*6 (S.D.N.Y. June 23, 2023) (severity).
51. *Cosimano v. S.I.S. Tech Valli*, No. 22-cv-39, 2023 WL 8043832, at \*8 (C.D. Cal. June 21, 2023) (severity).
52. *Clinkenbeard v. Auten*, No. 2:22-cv-277, 2023 WL 4103931, at \*2 (S.D. Ind. May 17, 2023), aff'd, No. 23-2217, 2024 WL 3026125, at \*2 (7th Cir. June 17, 2024) (severity).
53. *Qazi v. Seroski*, No. 22-cv-14, 2023 WL 3871969, at \*6 (D. Colo. May 11, 2023), report and recommendation adopted, 2023 WL 3866406 (June 7, 2023) (severity).
54. *Alvarado v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, No. 22-cv-1723, 2023 WL 4089490, at \*6-7 (D.S.C. May 10, 2023), report and recommendation adopted, 2023 WL 4088829 (June 20, 2023) (severity).
55. *Stine v. Merrell*, No. 21-cv-422, 2023 WL 3190798, at \*4 (D. Ariz. Apr. 28, 2023).
56. *Norton v. Kwon*, No. 22-cv-109, 2023 WL 3042281, at \*5 (D. Haw. Apr. 21, 2023) (severity).
57. *Locke v. Root*, No. 21-cv-3051, 2023 WL 2914184, at \*6 (D. Kan. Apr. 12, 2023) (severity).
58. *Thieme v. United States*, No. 21-cv-682, 2023 WL 2584102, at \*13 (D.N.J. Mar. 21, 2023) (severity).
59. *White v. Derr*, No. 22-cv-159, 2023 WL 2588013, at \*5-6 (D. Haw. Mar. 21, 2023) (alternative remedies and severity).

60. *Kaneakua v. Derr*, No. 22-cv-201, 2023 WL 2539952, at \*5-6 (D. Haw. Mar. 16, 2023) (alternative remedies and severity).
61. *Lu v. Kwon*, 660 F. Supp. 3d 977, 985 (D. Haw. 2023) (severity).
62. *Johnson v. Dhaliwal*, No. 21-cv-6526, 2023 WL 2483483, at \*4 (C.D. Cal. Feb. 13, 2023), report and recommendation adopted, 2023 WL 2479588 (Mar. 11, 2023) (severity).
63. *Brewer v. Doe*, No. 22-cv-683, 2023 WL 2770096, at \*4-5 (W.D. Okla. Feb. 8, 2023), report and recommendation adopted, 2023 WL 2761136 (Apr. 3, 2023) (alternative remedies).
64. *Hammack v. Schneider*, No. 19-cv-230, 2023 WL 143312, at \*3 (S.D. Ill. Jan. 10, 2023) (severity).
65. *Archer v. Alms*, No. 20-cv-1247, 2023 WL 8367692, at \*3 (D. Colo. Jan. 5, 2023) (alternative remedies and severity).
66. *Prucha v. Watson*, 672 F. Supp. 3d 642, 650 (S.D. Ind. 2023) (severity).
67. *Sloan v. Ratliff*, No. 3:21-cv-2663, 2022 WL 18814742, at \*3-4 (N.D. Tex. Dec. 4, 2022), report and recommendation adopted, 2023 WL 2144156 (Feb. 21, 2023) (severity).
68. *Sloan v. Zook*, No. 3:21-cv-2684, 2022 WL 18109548, at \*3-4 (N.D. Tex. Dec. 4, 2022), report and recommendation adopted, 2023 WL 36075 (Jan. 3, 2023) (severity).
69. *Foreman v. United States*, No. 2:22-cv-10401, 2022 WL 17826503, at \*6-7 & n.4 (E.D. Mich. Nov. 16, 2022), report and recommendation adopted, 2023 WL 1991561 (Feb. 14, 2023) (alternative remedies).

70. *Washington v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, No. 5:16-cv-3913, 2022 WL 3701577, at \*5 (D.S.C. Aug. 26, 2022) (severity).