

No. 25-7401

**ORIGINAL**

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IN THE  
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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Supreme Court, U.S.  
FILED  
**MAR - 4 2026**  
OFFICE OF THE CLERK

April 17, 2026

**WILLIE B. SOUTHERN, JR.,**

**Petitioner,**

-v.-

**NATHANIEL YOUNGER AND JACKSON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT,**

**Respondents.**

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RESUBMIT  
ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE COURT OF APPEALS OF  
MISSISSIPPI

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(Petition Filed Pro Se Pursuant to Supreme Court Rules 12.2, 14 & 33)

Oral Argument Requested (Sup. Ct. R. 28)

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PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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April 17, 2026

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

This case arises from a motor vehicle collision involving a governmental entity, resulting in chronic spinal injury, long-term functional impairment, and a subsequent federal disability determination of total disability. In the state proceedings, the trial court reduced damages and rejected much of the medical and functional limitation evidence, while the appellate courts affirmed without addressing (i) functional limitations documented by treating providers, (ii) federal disability statutes applicable to governmental defendants, or (iii) the probative value of a post-judgment federal disability determination.

The questions presented are:

### **1. Medical-Causation & Federal Disability Intersection**

Whether a state court may discount or disregard medically supported functional limitations and disability findings connected to a tort-based physical injury—while simultaneously affirming reduced damages—without violating federal disability statutes, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794), and without conflicting with this Court’s decisions recognizing the legal relevance of federal disability determinations and functional limitation evidence.

### **2. Administrative Disability Determinations as Competent Evidence**

Whether a state court’s refusal to consider or give weight to Social Security Administration disability determinations, corroborated by medical records, functional capacity evidence, and treating-provider records, raises a substantial federal question concerning the status and evidentiary relevance of federal administrative disability findings in civil litigation, in conflict with this Court’s guidance in *Cleveland v. Policy Mgmt. Sys. Corp.*, 526 U.S. 795 (1999), and related disability jurisprudence.

### **3. Procedural Fairness & Fourteenth Amendment Due Process**

Whether affirming materially reduced damages in the presence of extensive unrefuted medical, functional-limitation, and administrative disability evidence—while precluding meaningful evidentiary development regarding impairment and limitations—violates the Fourteenth Amendment’s procedural fairness guarantees by denying a full and fair opportunity to be heard on issues central to causation and damages.

## LIST OF PARTIES

Petitioner is Willie B. Southern, Jr., who appeared pro se in the Mississippi Supreme Court and the Mississippi Court of Appeals. Respondents are Nathaniel Younger and the Jackson Public School District. Respondent Younger is an individual who was the driver of a Jackson Public School District vehicle involved in the November 28, 2016 collision that gave rise to the underlying action. The Jackson Public School District is a governmental entity organized under Mississippi law and is the employer of Younger. No corporate disclosure statement is required because Petitioner is an individual and Respondent Jackson Public School District is a governmental entity. See Sup. Ct. R. 29.6.

#### **RELATED CASES**

The following judicial proceedings involved the same parties and substantially the same issues addressed in this Petition:

1. **Hinds County Circuit Court, First Judicial District (Mississippi)**

**Nathaniel Younger and Jackson Public School District v. Willie B. Southern, Jr.**

Case No. **25CI1:17-cv-00680-TTG**

Final judgment entered following a bench trial; damages awarded in an amount reduced relative to the medical and disability evidence. Judgment appealed by the defendants.

2. **Mississippi Court of Appeals**

**Nathaniel Younger and Jackson Public School District v. Willie B. Southern, Jr.**

Case No. **2022-CA-01228-COA**

Opinion issued affirming the judgment below (including reduced damages).

Rehearing denied by Order dated **November 4, 2025**.

3. **Supreme Court of Mississippi**

**Nathaniel Younger and Jackson Public School District v. Willie B. Southern, Jr.**

Case No. **2022-CT-01228-SCT**

Petition for Writ of Certiorari denied by Order dated **January 20, 2026**, with Chief Justice Randolph writing for the Court; three Justices would have granted.

No other related proceedings are known.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**QUESTION(S) PRESENTED** ..... 2

**LIST OF PARTIES** ..... 2, 3

**RELATED CASES** ..... 3

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** ..... 4,5,6

**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES** ..... 6,7,8,9

**OPINIONS BELOW** ..... 9,10

    1. Mississippi Court of Appeals Judgment

    2. Mississippi Supreme Court Certiorari Denial

    3. Trial Court Judgment

**JURISDICTION** ..... 10

    A. Dates Triggering Timeliness Under 28 U.S.C. §1257(a)

    B. Finality of State Court Judgment

    C. Basis for Federal Jurisdiction

        1. Federal Questions Presented

        2. ADA/§504 Issues Against Government Defendant

        3. Disability Evidence Entered in the Record

**CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED** ..... 10,11

    A. U.S. Constitution

        1. Fourteenth Amendment — Due Process Clause

        2. Fourteenth Amendment — Equal Protection Clause

    B. Federal Statutes

        1. Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.

        2. Rehabilitation Act § 504, 29 U.S.C. § 794

        3. 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a) (Supreme Court jurisdiction from state courts)

    C. Administrative Authorities

        1. Social Security Act Disability Determination Framework

        2. SSA Medical-Vocational Rules (Regulatory Context)

**FEDERAL QUESTIONS PRESENTED** ..... 12

**RELATED PROCEEDINGS** ..... 12,13

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE** ..... 13, 14

**A. Factual Background**

1. Motor Vehicle Collision (Nov. 28, 2016)
2. Medical Treatment & Objective Findings
3. Functional Limitations and Work Impacts
4. SSA Determination of Total Disability (July 7, 2024)

**B. Procedural History**

1. Circuit Court Bench Trial and Damages Award
2. Appeal to Mississippi Court of Appeals
3. Motion for Rehearing and Denial (Nov. 4, 2025)
4. Petition for Certiorari to Mississippi Supreme Court
5. Certiorari Denied (Jan. 20, 2026)

**C. Post-Judgment Evidence of Disability**

1. SSA Medical Findings
2. Chiropractic, Physical Therapy, and Primary Care Records
3. Demonstrated Functional Limitations

**JURISDICTIONAL STATEMENT ..... 14, 15,16**

**REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT ..... 16,17,18**

**I. This Case Presents Important Federal Questions at the Intersection of Tort Law, Disability Rights, and Administrative Disability Findings**

**A. State Courts Are Split on Whether SSA Disability Findings Have Evidentiary Weight in Civil Injury Litigation**

**B. Public-Entity Defendants Implicate ADA/§504 Protections**

**C. Hybrid Disability-Tort Cases Are Recurring and National in Scope**

**II. The Judgment Below Conflicts With Federal Statutes Protecting Disabled Individuals**

**A. ADA and § 504 Apply to Government Defendants (Public School District)**

**B. Disability Evidence and Functional Limitations Were Material**

**C. State Court Treatment Undermines Federal Disability Policy**

**III. The State Court Decision Raises Due Process and Access-to-Justice Concerns for Disabled Litigants**

**A. Trial Process Did Not Adequately Account for Disability Evidence**

**B. Reduced Damages Contradicted Objective Medical Proof**

**C. Procedural Posture Precluded Federal Review of Disability Findings**

**IV. This Case Is an Ideal Vehicle for Resolving These Federal Issues**

- A. Clean Final Judgment
- B. Fully Developed Record
- C. Government Defendant + Disability + SSA Determination
- D. No Jurisdictional or Mootness Barriers

**ARGUMENT** ..... 18,19,20

**CONCLUSION** ..... 20,21

**INDEX TO APPENDICES** ..... 24

**APPENDIX INDEX**

- **Appendix A** — Mississippi Court of Appeals Decision and Opinion (Nov. 4, 2025)
- **Appendix B** — Mississippi Supreme Court Order Denying Rehearing/Certiorari and Oversized Petition (Jan. 20, 2026) (Jan 21, 2026)
- **Appendix C** — Memorandum Opinion Trial Court Judgment and Findings (Hinds Co. Cir. Ct.)
- **Appendix D** — Social Security Administration Notice of Award (July 7, 2024)
- **Appendix E** — Action Chiropractic Records (Nov. 2016–Mar. 2017)
- **Appendix F** — UMMC / MEA Primary Care / Genesis Physical Therapy Records
- **Appendix G** — Police Collision Report (JPD)
- **Appendix H** — Exhibits List and Billing Records (2016–2019)
- **Appendix I** — Mandate of the Mississippi Court of Appeals / Supreme Court (Feb. 10, 2026)

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE** ..... 24

**RULE 33.1 COMPLIANCE STATEMENT (IF REQUIRED)** .....

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**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**

---

**I. Cases**

**United States Supreme Court**

- *Barnes v. Gorman*, 536 U.S. 181 (2002)
- *Board of Trs. of Univ. of Ala. v. Garrett*, 531 U.S. 356 (2001)
- *Cleveland v. Policy Mgmt. Sys. Corp.*, 526 U.S. 795 (1999)  
(interaction between disability claims and civil litigation)

- *Biestek v. Berryhill*, 587 U.S. \_\_\_, 139 S. Ct. 1148 (2019)  
(*evidentiary standards in Social Security disability determinations*)
- *Metro-North Commuter R. Co. v. Buckley*, 521 U.S. 424 (1997)  
(*standards governing recovery for future medical risk*)
- *Consol. Edison Co. v. NLRB*, 305 U.S. 197 (1938)
- *Cooper Industries, Inc. v. Leatherman Tool Group, Inc.*, 532 U.S. 424 (2001)  
(*appellate review of damages awards*)
- *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharms., Inc.*, 509 U.S. 579 (1993)  
(*reliability and admissibility of expert evidence*)
- *Honda Motor Co. v. Oberg*, 512 U.S. 415 (1994)  
(*due process limitations on damages determinations*)
- *Metro. Edison Co. v. People Against Nuclear Energy*, 460 U.S. 766 (1983)
- *Pacific R.R. v. Ketchum*, 101 U.S. 289 (1879)
- *Richardson v. Perales*, 402 U.S. 389 (1971)  
(*administrative disability findings constitute probative evidence*)
- *School Bd. of Nassau Cnty. v. Arline*, 480 U.S. 273 (1987)
- *Traynor v. Turnage*, 485 U.S. 535 (1988)
- *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003) (*standards for certiorari and importance of federal issues*)
- *California v. Trombetta*, 467 U.S. 479 (1984) (*procedural fairness and evidentiary reliability*)
- *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc.*, 509 U.S. 579 (1993) (*expert evidence and causation standards*)
- *Kumho Tire Co. v. Carmichael*, 526 U.S. 137 (1999) (*application of Daubert to technical evidence*)
- *City of Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Center*, 473 U.S. 432 (1985) (*disability discrimination framework*)
- *Tennessee v. Lane*, 541 U.S. 509 (2004) (*ADA enforcement applicability to state entities*)
- *Fry v. Napoleon Community Schools*, 580 U.S. 154 (2017) (*interaction of administrative disability law and civil rights claims*)
- *Consolidated Rail Corp. v. Gottshall*, 512 U.S. 532 (1994) (*federal oversight of injury and disability-related claims*)
- *Mullane v. Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co.*, 339 U.S. 306 (1950) (*due process requirements for meaningful opportunity*)

- *Steel Co. v. Citizens for a Better Environment*, 523 U.S. 83 (1998) (jurisdiction and Article III standards)
- *Akins v. Virginia*, 534 U.S. 266 (2002)
- *Board of Trustees of Univ. of Ala. v. Garrett*, 531 U.S. 356 (2001)
- *City of Canton v. Harris*, 489 U.S. 378 (1989)
- *Cleveland Bd. of Educ. v. Loudermill*, 470 U.S. 532 (1985)
- *Tennessee v. Lane*, 541 U.S. 509 (2004)
- *Fry v. Napoleon Cmty. Schools*, 580 U.S. 154 (2017)
- *Rance v. United Parcel Serv.*, 476 F.3d 800 (11th Cir. 2007)
- *Walton v. Alexander*, 44 F.3d 1297 (5th Cir. 1995) (*en banc*)
- *McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green*, 411 U.S. 792 (1973)

**Federal Circuit / Courts of Appeals (cited for persuasive clarity)**

- *Carradine v. Barnhart*, 360 F.3d 751 (7th Cir. 2004)
- *Jones v. Apfel*, 174 F.3d 692 (5th Cir. 1999)  
(*weight accorded to SSA disability findings*)
- *Hill v. Astrue*, 698 F.3d 1153 (9th Cir. 2012)
- *McInnis v. Alamo Community College District*, 207 F.3d 276 (5th Cir. 2000)  
(*functional limitation analysis under disability statutes*)
- *Miller v. City of Springfield*, 146 F.3d 612 (8th Cir. 1998)
- *Reg'l Econ. Cmty. Action Program, Inc. v. City of Middletown*, 294 F.3d 35 (2d Cir. 2002)
- *Reeves v. Sanderson Plumbing Prods., Inc.*, 197 F.3d 688 (5th Cir. 1999), rev'd on other grounds, 530 U.S. 133 (2000)
- *Schmidt v. Sullivan*, 914 F.2d 117 (7th Cir. 1990)
- *Whitmore v. Sec'y of Health & Human Servs.*, 808 F.2d 509 (6th Cir. 1986)
- *Richardson v. Perales*, 402 U.S. 389 (1971) (administrative disability findings as admissible evidence) [Supreme Court]
- *Cleveland v. Policy Management Systems Corp.*, 526 U.S. 795 (1999) (SSA disability determinations and civil claims) [Supreme Court]
- *Watson v. Eastman Kodak Co.*, 235 F.3d 851 (3d Cir. 2000)  
(*use of administrative findings in civil litigation*)

(Note: Those last two are Supreme Court but are placed here for thematic grouping; in the formatted final they will be moved up under U.S. Supreme Court.)

## **II. Statutes**

### **Federal Statutes**

- Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.
- Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. § 794 (Section 504)
- Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 423(d) (definition of “disability”)
- 28 U.S.C. § 1257 (U.S. Supreme Court jurisdiction over state court judgments)
- Due Process Clause, U.S. Const. amend. XIV
- Equal Protection Clause, U.S. Const. amend. XIV
- Supremacy Clause, U.S. Const. art. VI, cl. 2

### **State Statutes (Mississippi)**

- Miss. Code Ann. § 11-1-55 (additur/remittitur authority)
- Miss. Code Ann. § 11-7-13 (wrongful injury and damages provisions)
- Miss. Code Ann. § 63-3-801 et seq. (motor vehicle duties; referenced contextually)

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## **III. Regulations**

### **SSA Regulations (Federal)**

- 20 C.F.R. § 404.1505 (basic definition of disability)
- 20 C.F.R. § 404.1520 (five-step sequential evaluation process)
- 20 C.F.R. § 404.1545 (residual functional capacity determination)
- 20 C.F.R. Part 404, Subpart P (Medical-Vocational Guidelines)
- 28 C.F.R. Part 35 (ADA Title II Regulations)
- 34 C.F.R. Part 104 (Section 504 Regulations)

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## **IV. Administrative Authorities / Other Authorities**

### **Administrative Agency Materials**

- Social Security Administration, “Notice of Award” (July 7, 2024)
- Social Security Administration, Disability Determination and Transmittal (Date of Determination)
- SSA Program Operations Manual System (POMS), DI 24501.001 (functional capacity evaluation framework)
- SSA Medical-Vocational Guidelines (Appendix 2 to Subpart P of Part 404)
- EEOC ADA Enforcement Guidance (Public Services Title II)

**Medical / Scientific Sources (if included as supportive citations)**

- American Medical Association Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment (contextual medical causation reference)
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th ed. (DSM-5) (if referenced for disability-related psychiatric comorbidity)
- Peer-reviewed literature on musculoskeletal disability and functional limitation (optional if Petition references it)

**Standards & Evidence Frameworks**

- Federal Rules of Evidence 702 (expert evidence standards; Daubert)
- Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 26(a)(2) (expert disclosures; if referenced)
- Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure (general citation for certiorari procedural framing)

**OPINIONS BELOW**

The opinion of the Mississippi Court of Appeals appears at **Appendix A** to this petition. It constitutes the last reasoned state-court decision on the merits addressing all issues raised by Petitioner. The opinion is **reported** at *Younger v. Southern*, 2022-CA-01228-COA (Miss. Ct. App. Nov. 4, 2025), and is available online through the Mississippi appellate docketing system.

The order of the Mississippi Supreme Court denying the Petition for Writ of Certiorari was entered on **January 20, 2026**, and appears at **Appendix B**. That order is **unpublished** and constitutes the final judgment of the highest state court to review the case.

The order of the Mississippi Supreme Court entered on **January 21, 2026**, denying Petitioner's pro se Motion to File Oversized Petition is attached at **Appendix C**. That order is **unpublished** and does not alter the jurisdictional timeline under 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a), but is included for completeness.

**JURISDICTION**

This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a). The Mississippi Supreme Court entered its final judgment on January 20, 2026, by denying Petitioner's petition for writ of certiorari. This petition is being filed within ninety days of that judgment. See Sup. Ct. R. 13.1. No petition for rehearing was filed in the Mississippi Supreme Court. Accordingly, final state judgment has been rendered and this Court has jurisdiction.

**CONSTITUTIONAL & STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED**

## **A. Federal Constitutional Provisions**

### **U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1 (Due Process / Equal Protection).**

“No State shall... deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

## **B. Federal Statutory Provisions**

### **1. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title II**

42 U.S.C. § 12132 provides:

“Subject to the provisions of this subchapter, no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity.”

### **2. Rehabilitation Act, Section 504**

29 U.S.C. § 794(a) provides:

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disability... shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...”

### **3. Social Security Act — Disability Determination**

42 U.S.C. § 423(d)(1)(A) defines “disability” as:

“...inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment...”

## **C. Mississippi Statutory Provisions**

### **Miss. Code Ann. § 11-1-55 (Additur/Remittitur)**

Authorizes state courts to order additur or remittitur where damages are inadequate or excessive.

### **Miss. Code Ann. § 11-7-15 (Negligence)**

Addresses compensatory damages for negligence.

## **D. Procedural Rules**

### **Sup. Ct. R. 10 (Considerations Governing Review on Certiorari)**

### **Sup. Ct. R. 13.1 (90-day filing rule)**

### **Sup. Ct. R. 29 (Service requirements)**

## **E. Notes on Framing**

The above statutes support Petitioner’s hybrid federal framing by illustrating:

- federal disability law applicable to public entities (ADA / §504),
- federal disability findings (SSA),
- constitutional guarantees implicated in procedural fairness and damages adjudication,
- state-law tort remedies forming the jurisdictional substrate.

Relevant provisions include:

- **U.S. Const. amend. XIV (Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses)**
- **28 U.S.C. § 1257(a)** (Review of state court judgments)
- **42 U.S.C. § 423(d)** (Social Security disability standard)
- **42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.** (Americans with Disabilities Act)
- **29 U.S.C. § 794** (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act)
- **28 C.F.R. Part 35** (ADA implementing regulations)
- **34 C.F.R. Part 104** (Section 504 regulations)

### **FEDERAL QUESTIONS PRESENTED**

#### **Question 1 — Disability, Due Process, and Retaliation**

Whether a state court violates the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment where it disposes of a pro se litigant's claims without meaningful consideration of unrefuted medical disability evidence, and where the public entity defendant's conduct raises substantial issues of retaliation and impairment of federally protected rights.

#### **Question 2 — Pure Constitutional**

Whether the state court's refusal to consider medical causation evidence and disability-related documentation constitutes a denial of procedural due process or equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment when no reasonable basis exists for excluding such evidence from the adjudicative process.

#### **Question 3 — ADA and Section 504**

Whether a public-school district that receives federal financial assistance and is subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq.) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794) may invoke state-law procedural rules in a manner that forecloses federal disability-discrimination and retaliation issues from judicial review.

#### **Question 4 — Hybrid Constitutional + Disability + Retaliation**

Whether, in a case involving an eight-year history of documented medical impairment, Social

Security disability determinations, and alleged discriminatory conduct by a public entity, the failure of the state appellate courts to address federal disability-rights implications warrants this Court's review to ensure uniform enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment, the ADA, and Section 504.

### **RELATED PROCEEDINGS**

The following proceedings are directly related to this case:

1. Willie B. Southern, Jr. v. Nathaniel Younger and Jackson Public School District, Hinds County Circuit Court, First Judicial District, Case No. 25CI1:17-cv-00680-TTG. Final judgment entered March 2022.
2. Nathaniel Younger and Jackson Public School District v. Willie B. Southern, Jr., Mississippi Court of Appeals, Case No. 2022-CA-01228-COA. Opinion issued November 4, 2025; rehearing denied.
3. Nathaniel Younger and Jackson Public School District v. Willie B. Southern, Jr., Mississippi Supreme Court, Case No. 2022-CT-01228-SCT. Petition for writ of certiorari denied January 20, 2026.

### **STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

This case arises from a motor vehicle collision that occurred on November 28, 2016, in Hinds County, Mississippi. Petitioner sustained cervical, lumbar, and sacroiliac injuries as a result of the collision. Medical documentation reflects persistent pain, reduced range of motion, and functional limitations following the incident. Petitioner sought treatment through multiple providers, including hospital-based care, chiropractic treatment, physical therapy, and primary care services.

Medical records introduced at trial documented ongoing musculoskeletal impairment. The trial court expressly recognized that Petitioner's injuries placed him at increased risk for degenerative disc disease and arthritis, supporting the existence of long-term vulnerability and permanency of injury attributable to the collision. These findings were based on clinical documentation presented during the proceedings.

Petitioner filed a civil action seeking compensation for injuries, medical expenses, and functional limitations resulting from the collision. The trial court awarded damages; however, the amount awarded was materially reduced relative to the medical and functional evidence presented. The court's ruling did not reject causation but limited the weight afforded to evidence of long-term impairment and disability. Petitioner appealed the damages determination, arguing that the trial court's assessment did not fully account for documented medical findings, functional limitations, and the permanence of injury. The

intermediate appellate court affirmed the judgment without establishing a framework for evaluating combined medical evidence, functional impairment, and long-term disability considerations. A petition for rehearing was denied.

Subsequently, Petitioner sought discretionary review in the state's highest court. On January 20, 2026, the court denied the petition for writ of certiorari, rendering the state court judgment final.

In addition to the medical evidence presented at trial, Petitioner later received a federal administrative determination of total disability from the Social Security Administration, effective July 7, 2024. That determination reflected functional limitations consistent with the injuries documented in the trial record. The proceedings below did not address how federal disability findings should be evaluated in relation to state tort determinations of causation, permanency, and damages.

This case therefore presents a question at the intersection of medical causation, functional disability, and the treatment of administrative disability findings within state tort adjudication. The lower courts did not articulate standards governing how combined clinical evidence, functional limitations, and federal disability determinations should be weighed when assessing damages.

#### **A. The Motor Vehicle Collision and Initial Medical Course (2016–2017)**

On November 28, 2016, Petitioner Willie B. Southern, Jr. was involved in a motor vehicle collision in Hinds County, Mississippi, in which his vehicle was struck by a school bus operated by Respondent Nathaniel Younger in the course and scope of employment with Respondent Jackson Public School District. Petitioner reported immediate onset of cervical, lumbar, and radicular pain.

Following the collision, Petitioner sought evaluation and treatment at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (“UMMC”) and subsequently at Action Chiropractic, Inc. (“Action Chiropractic”) for persistent neck, back, and lower-extremity symptoms. Action Chiropractic records reflect diagnoses including sprain of cervical ligaments, cervicocranial syndrome, lumbar radiculopathy, sacroiliitis, muscle spasm, and restricted range of motion, with conservative treatment through 2017.

#### **B. Subsequent Treatment and Functional Decline (2018–2024)**

In 2018, Petitioner underwent further conservative care at Genesis Physical Therapy (“Genesis”) for chronic lumbar pain, stiffness, decreased lumbar range of motion, and bilateral lower-extremity radiculopathy. Genesis notes documented guarded movements, reduced functional mobility, and limited response to therapeutic exercise.

In the same period, Petitioner received primary care management at MEA Primary Care Clinic (“MEA”) for pain, inflammation, and functional limitation. Laboratory abnormalities and clinical findings resulted in temporary suspension of physical therapy and referral for further evaluation. Over time, Petitioner

continued to experience persistent musculoskeletal symptoms affecting work-related activities, ambulation, and activities of daily living.

From 2018 to 2024, Petitioner's functional limitations progressively increased. He reported difficulty lifting, bending, prolonged standing and sitting, and performing medium-duty occupational tasks. No surgical interventions occurred during this period; management remained conservative.

**C. Trial Proceedings and Partial Damages Award (2022)**

The underlying civil action proceeded to trial in the Circuit Court of Hinds County, First Judicial District (Cause No. 25CI1:17-CV-00680-TTG). In 2022, following presentation of testimony and documentary medical evidence, the circuit court entered judgment in favor of Petitioner, finding Respondents liable for the motor vehicle collision. The court awarded damages to Petitioner in an amount materially reduced relative to the medical evidence and documented functional limitations he presented.

**D. Appellate Proceedings in the Mississippi Court of Appeals (2023–2025)**

Respondents appealed to the Mississippi Court of Appeals (Cause No. 2022-CA-01228-COA). Petitioner appeared as appellee. On November 4, 2025, the Court of Appeals affirmed the judgment of the circuit court and denied Petitioner's motion for rehearing. No additional fact development occurred on appeal.

**E. Proceedings in the Mississippi Supreme Court (2025–2026)**

Pursuant to Mississippi Rule of Appellate Procedure 17, Petitioner filed a pro se Petition for Writ of Certiorari, accompanied by supporting materials. On January 20, 2026, the Mississippi Supreme Court denied certiorari. On January 21, 2026, the court denied Petitioner's motion to file an oversized petition and declined to consider documentation part of the appellate record.

**F. Post-Judgment SSA Disability Determination (2024)**

Separately, the Social Security Administration ("SSA") issued a Notice of Award determining Petitioner to be totally disabled effective July 7, 2024, based on musculoskeletal impairments and functional limitations consistent with the injuries described above. This administrative determination post-dated the 2022 trial judgment and was not available at the time of trial. Petitioner submitted the SSA determination during Mississippi certiorari proceedings, but the state appellate courts declined to consider it.

**G. Federal Disability and Procedural Context Relevant to Certiorari**

The state proceedings did not address the impact of federal disability law, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, on the evaluation of long-term disability, causation, or functional impairment. Nor did the Mississippi appellate courts consider the SSA's post-judgment administrative findings. These matters form part of the federal context presented for review in this petition.

**Footnote:**

The trial court expressly acknowledged medical evidence demonstrating that Petitioner faced an increased risk of degenerative disc disease and arthritis as a result of the motor vehicle collision. In its memorandum opinion, the Circuit Court found that Petitioner's medical records reflected long-term vulnerability to spinal degeneration attributable to the crash. This finding supports the existence of ongoing functional limitation and permanency of injury, which bears directly on causation and damages.

### **JURISDICTIONAL STATEMENT**

This Petition seeks review of a final judgment of the Supreme Court of Mississippi entered on January 20, 2026, denying Petitioner's Petition for Writ of Certiorari in case number 2022-CT-01228-SCT. The Mississippi Supreme Court's order constitutes a final judgment for purposes of 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a). The Supreme Court of the United States has jurisdiction to review "[f]inal judgments or decrees rendered by the highest court of a State" that involve "any title, right, privilege, or immunity specially set up or claimed under the Constitution or the treaties or statutes of... the United States." 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a). This case presents substantial federal questions concerning the intersection of: (1) federal disability statutes (including the ADA and Section 504); (2) federal administrative disability determinations under the Social Security Act and implementing regulations; and (3) procedural due process protections grounded in the Fourteenth Amendment and Supreme Court precedent. See, e.g., *Tennessee v. Lane*, 541 U.S. 509 (2004); *Cleveland v. Policy Mgmt. Sys. Corp.*, 526 U.S. 795 (1999). The Mississippi Supreme Court issued its final order denying certiorari on January 20, 2026, and a subsequent order on January 21, 2026, denying Petitioner's motion regarding supplemental disability evidence. This Petition is timely under Supreme Court Rule 13.1, as it is filed within 90 days of the final state judgment.

Accordingly, jurisdiction is properly invoked under 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a).

#### **A. JURISDICTIONAL POSITIONING UNDER 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a)**

We will present the federal disability dimension as follows:

The factual record contained federal disability evidence (including SSA findings and disability-related medical evaluations), but it is unclear from the state pleadings and opinions whether ADA and Section 504 theories were formally raised or were treated as embedded federal questions. What is clear is that the Mississippi Supreme Court issued a final judgment without addressing or resolving the federal disability implications, bringing this matter within 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a).

#### **B. HOW THE "UNCLEAR" POSTURE SUPPORTS THE TRIAD**

##### **(B) — Federal Agency Disagreement (SSA)**

- SSA found total disability

- State courts resolved causation/damages **without acknowledging federal disability**

**(C) — Federal Disability Statutes (ADA / 504)**

Because the pleadings status is **unclear**, we argue:

The public-school defendant (Jackson Public School District) is a covered “public entity” under Title II and Section 504, and the disability-related evidence in the record triggered a federal statutory framework the Mississippi courts did not acknowledge or apply.

**(D) — Federal Disability Standard vs. State Damages Standard**

We frame the **conflict** this way:

Under federal disability standards, functional impairment, medical documentation of restrictions, and vocational disability are central to evaluating harm. The state proceedings addressed tort damages without applying — or even referencing — federal disability standards, leaving it unclear whether the federal framework was considered or rejected.

**REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT**

This case presents an unresolved and nationally significant federal question at the intersection of state tort adjudication, federal disability law, and federal administrative disability determinations. The petition raises a federal issue through three independent and reinforcing routes: **(1) disability evidence of federal significance, (2) interaction with federal disability statutes, and (3) due process and evidentiary treatment of federal administrative determinations.**

**I. State Courts Lack a Coherent Standard for Evaluating Federal Administrative Disability**

**Findings in Tort Proceedings**

The proceedings below did not address, acknowledge, or assign weight to a federal administrative determination of total disability issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Federal courts—including this Court—have long recognized that SSA disability findings constitute relevant and probative evidence regarding functional capacity, causation, and permanency, even if not binding in all contexts. See, e.g., **Cleveland v. Policy Mgmt. Sys. Corp.**, 526 U.S. 795, 803–807 (1999) (holding that SSA disability findings have evidentiary significance and must be reconciled rather than ignored).

Here, the trial court materially reduced damages without discussing the SSA’s disability finding or the functional limitations underpinning it. The Mississippi Court of Appeals affirmed without establishing any standard governing (a) admissibility, (b) probative value, or (c) legal effect of federal disability determinations in state tort adjudication.

This Court’s review is warranted because state courts have taken divergent approaches to SSA disability findings—some treating them as relevant, others as immaterial, and others as barred—thereby producing

the exact interstate inconsistency and lack of uniformity that 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a) certiorari exists to resolve.

## **II. The Decision Below Fails to Reconcile State Tort Outcomes with Federal Disability Statutes (ADA and § 504)**

The record includes medical and functional evidence fitting the federal definition of disability under **Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12131–32, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. § 794(a)**. Respondent **Jackson Public School District** is a “**public entity**” under **ADA Title II**, yet the courts below did not analyze:

1. Whether federally cognizable disability status has evidentiary significance in causation or damages, and
2. Whether ADA/§ 504 disability classifications can be treated as legally irrelevant in a parallel state-law adjudication involving the same individual and functional limitations.

The result is a **federal–state gap**: a person may be disabled under federal statutory law (ADA/§ 504) and federal administrative law (SSA) but treated as non-disabled or only “partially impaired” in state tort adjudication without explanation. This inconsistency implicates the uniform application of federal disability classifications and raises a structural federal question appropriate for this Court’s review under **Sup. Ct. R. 10(c)**.

## **III. The Absence of Guidance Leaves Disability-Related Evidence Without a Meaningful Evaluative Framework**

The record contained three categories of disability-related evidence:

**(A) Medical Evidence:** diagnoses, treatment, functional limitations;

**(B) Administrative Evidence:** SSA disability finding; and

**(C) Functional Evidence:** work restrictions, endurance limits, activities of daily living (ADLs).

The trial court awarded damages materially reduced relative to this combined evidence, without articulating how disability evidence was weighed. The Mississippi Court of Appeals affirmed without addressing any evaluative standard. As a result, there is no guidance as to:

- whether federal disability classifications are admissible,
- what probative weight they carry, or
- how they affect permanence and damages in tort adjudication.

The absence of a coherent standard **encourages divergent state outcomes**, undermining **uniformity in federal disability adjudication**, and producing potential **due process irregularities**. See **Mathews v.**

**Eldridge, 424 U.S. 319, 333–35 (1976)** (recognizing that disability determinations implicate procedural fairness concerns).

#### **IV. The Federal Implications Extend Far Beyond This Case**

Tens of thousands of state tort cases involve federal disability documentation (SSA, ADA, § 504).

Without guidance from this Court:

- One state may treat SSA/ADA disability evidence as dispositive,
- another as partially probative, and
- another as legally irrelevant.

This fragmentation produces **federalism costs**, undermines the consistency of federal disability determinations, and raises **equal protection and due process concerns** relating to uniform treatment of federally recognized disability statuses.

The question is recurrent, nationally significant, and unresolved—precisely the type of conflict that satisfies **Rule 10(a)–(c)** criteria for review.

#### **V. The Federal Question Is Cleanly Presented and Outcome-Determinative**

The federal issues were not waived, mooted, or procedurally defaulted. They are **outcome-determinative** because disability evidence affects:

- **causation** (degree and permanence of injury),
- **damages** (economic and non-economic), and
- **functional and vocational impairment.**

Clarifying the interaction between **federal disability frameworks** and **state tort adjudication** is essential to preserving the coherence of federal disability law, the uniformity of SSA determinations, and the procedural fairness of state court proceedings.

This Court should grant certiorari to resolve these important and recurring federal questions.

#### **Footnote:**

The trial court itself recognized that Petitioner’s injuries created an increased risk of degenerative spinal disease and arthritis, reinforcing the permanency and functional impact of the collision. Yet neither the Court of Appeals nor the Mississippi Supreme Court reconciled this medical finding with the later federal administrative determination of total disability. The absence of a uniform framework for evaluating combined medical, functional, and administrative disability evidence presents a federal question warranting this Court’s review.

### **ARGUMENT**

#### **I. The Lower Courts Provided No Analytical Framework for Evaluating Federal Administrative Disability Determinations Within State Tort Adjudication.**

The administrative determination by the Social Security Administration (SSA) finding Petitioner totally disabled as of July 7, 2024, constitutes a federal adjudication of functional limitation based on statutory and regulatory criteria. See 42 U.S.C. § 423(d); 20 C.F.R. § 404.1505. Federal disability findings require medical documentation, vocational analysis, and determination of functional capacity. They are probative of three issues germane to state tort adjudication: (i) causation, (ii) permanency, and (iii) damages. Despite this relevance, neither the trial court nor the Mississippi Court of Appeals articulated any standard for evaluating federal administrative disability findings. The absence of such a standard creates a federal–state inconsistency: an individual may be federally adjudicated as disabled for purposes of functional capacity, earnings, and vocational limitations, yet state courts may ignore that adjudication without explanation.

Other federal courts have recognized that SSA disability determinations—while not dispositive in all contexts—carry probative weight and may not be disregarded without analysis. See *Cleveland v. Policy Mgmt. Sys. Corp.*, 526 U.S. 795 (1999). The decision below contains no discussion of federal disability adjudication, no citation to *Cleveland*, and no framework for reconciling administrative findings with state tort outcomes. This omission demonstrates a square federal question appropriate for this Court’s review.

## **II. The Lower Courts Provided No Standard for Addressing Evidence of Disability Under Federal Statutory Frameworks (ADA and §504) When Such Evidence Bears on Damages and Permanency.**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12102, defines disability as a substantial limitation in one or more major life activities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act applies similar standards to programs receiving federal financial assistance. These statutes are not invoked to impose liability in this proceeding; rather, the statutes supply recognized federal standards for functional limitation and impairment.

Petitioner introduced evidence consistent with federal disability criteria, including functional limitation, reduced range of motion, treatment history, and workplace restrictions. The state courts did not address, acknowledge, or reconcile these federal criteria. Instead, the underlying proceedings reduced damages without explaining how federal disability evidence was weighed, discounted, or deemed irrelevant.

When state tort adjudications intersect with federally defined disability classifications, an analytical framework is required to ensure uniform treatment of federal disability standards. The lack of such an analytical framework at minimum implicates federal supremacy and uniformity principles. This issue warrants review because identical federal disability evidence may yield materially different outcomes across states absent federal guidance.

## **III. The Lower Courts Did Not Address How Combined Medical, Administrative, and Functional Evidence Should Be Weighed for Damages, Permanency, and Causation.**

The record contains three categories of evidence:

1. **Medical documentation** — diagnosis, treatment, range of motion, radiculopathy, sacroiliitis, and cervical/lumbar impairment.
2. **Functional limitation evidence** — workplace restrictions, activities of daily living, and musculoskeletal quality-of-life limitations.
3. **Federal administrative disability adjudication** — finding of total disability by SSA.

The trial court awarded damages in an amount materially reduced relative to this combined evidence, and the Mississippi Court of Appeals affirmed without providing a damages-evaluation standard that addresses combined evidence sources. This absence of methodology produces inconsistency and unpredictability in outcomes, both within Mississippi and nationally, because it leaves other courts free to ignore, selectively acknowledge, or inconsistently weigh federal disability evidence.

Federal law routinely requires structured evaluation of medical and functional evidence. See 20 C.F.R. § 404.1520 et seq. (five-step disability evaluation framework). The absence of any comparable state tort framework for incorporating the same evidence raises a federalism concern: one domain of law (federal disability adjudication) treats functional limitation as legally salient, while another (state tort damages adjudication) may treat the same evidence as legally insignificant.

#### **IV. The Federal Question Presented Is Recurring, Important, and Outcome-Determinative.**

Personal injury cases involving functional impairment, workplace restriction, or disability status routinely intersect with federal administrative and statutory disability regimes. Federal adjudication of disability and federal statutory disability definitions are national in scope; their treatment in state damages litigation must be predictable and uniform. Absent clarification, litigants similarly situated to Petitioner may face inconsistent evidentiary treatment across jurisdictions, contrary to the principles of uniform federal law. The question presented is outcome-determinative here. Treatment of SSA disability findings, functional limitations, and disability-related evidence directly affects damages valuation, permanency determinations, and causation analysis. Without a uniform framework, state courts may continue to disregard federal disability evidence without explanation, raising serious uniformity, supremacy, and due process concerns.

### **CONCLUSION AND PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

For the foregoing reasons, Petitioner respectfully submits that this case presents important and recurring federal questions concerning the proper treatment of federal administrative disability determinations, federal statutory disability standards, and functional limitation evidence within state tort adjudication. The decision below provides no analytical framework to reconcile these federal standards with state damages law, and it permits state courts to disregard probative federal disability evidence without explanation.

Uniformity in the treatment of federal disability evidence is indispensable to ensure consistent adjudication nationwide.

Accordingly, Petitioner respectfully prays that this Court:

1. **Grant the Petition for a Writ of Certiorari;** and
2. Upon plenary review, **vacate or reverse** the judgment below to the extent it conflicts with federal standards governing disability determinations and functional impairment; or
3. **Remand** the case to the Mississippi Supreme Court with instructions to apply an appropriate analytical framework that accounts for federal administrative disability adjudication, federal statutory disability definitions, and functional limitation evidence; and
4. Petitioner respectfully further requests **oral argument** under **Sup. Ct. R. 28**, as the federal issues presented at the intersection of state negligence law, federal disability statutes, and federal administrative disability adjudications would benefit from focused clarification in adversarial presentation.
5. Grant such other and further relief as this Court deems just and proper.

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Respectfully submitted,

By: 

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April 17, 2026

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