

NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION

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

United States Court of Appeals
For the Seventh Circuit
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Submitted May 19, 2025*

Decided May 20, 2025

*Before*DIANE S. SYKES, *Chief Judge*THOMAS L. KIRSCH II, *Circuit Judge*NANCY L. MALDONADO, *Circuit Judge*

No. 24-3143

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

VANCE FIELDS,
Defendant-Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District
Court for the Eastern District of
Wisconsin.

No. 21-CR-21-1-JPS

J. P. Stadtmueller,
Judge.

ORDER

Vance Fields, a federal prisoner, appeals the denial of his motion for compassionate release. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i). The district judge determined that Fields did not establish an extraordinary and compelling reason for release, and

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

that, even if he had, the sentencing factors in 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a) weighed against his release. The second reason alone is adequate, and we affirm.

In September 2021 Fields pleaded guilty to possessing with intent to distribute heroin and fentanyl, 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1), (b)(1)(A), and unlawfully possessing a firearm as a felon, 18 U.S.C. §§ 922(g), 924(a)(2) (2018). Based on a total offense level of 37 and a criminal history category of V, his guidelines range for imprisonment was 324 to 405 months. U.S.S.G. § 5A. The judge sentenced him below the guidelines to 180 months' imprisonment.

After Fields was convicted but before he was sentenced, the mother of his eight-year-old daughter (K.F.) was shot and killed. Given the circumstances of Fields's incarceration, K.F. went to live with her aunt. But in her aunt's custody, K.F. apparently was mistreated and abused. K.F. moved in with a new legal guardian (and Fields's friend), Nicole Goins. Goins now says, however, that she can no longer care for K.F. because K.F.'s depression, anxiety, and eating disorder (caused by her mother's death, her father's incarceration, and the abuse she suffered) are more than Goins can handle.

Two years after he was sentenced, Fields moved for compassionate release. (He was resentenced in the meantime for reasons not relevant to this appeal.) He argued that his family circumstances—K.F.'s deteriorating condition, the incapacitation of her parents, and Goins's assertion that she can no longer care for K.F.—were an extraordinary and compelling reason for his release, as set forth in the relevant policy statements. *See* U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13(b)(3)(A) (listing "[t]he death or incapacitation of the caregiver of the defendant's minor child" as an extraordinary and compelling reason), (b)(5) (catchall provision for "[o]ther [r]easons"). Fields further contended that he had demonstrated an "extraordinary level" of rehabilitation, as demonstrated by his completion of educational courses, his lack of disciplinary infractions, and his participation as a mentor in a therapeutic program. And he contended that the § 3553(a) factors weighed in his favor because the five years he had served were sufficient to satisfy the purposes of sentencing, his advancing age (39 at the time) made him unlikely to recidivate, and he did not pose a danger to the community.

The judge denied the motion. First, the judge determined that Fields had not shown that K.F.'s caregiver—Goins—was "incapacitated" within the meaning of U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13(b)(3)(A). The judge found that Goins was not incapacitated because "incapacitation" requires that the caregiver be incapable of caring for the child owing to a severe injury or illness. And the judge decided that K.F.'s poor condition, on its own, did not constitute an extraordinary and compelling basis for Fields's release. Second,

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and independently, the judge noted that the § 3553(a) factors counseled against Fields's release because he had a significant criminal history; he had committed a serious drug offense; his purported motivation to financially support his children through crime was, according to the judge, insincere; and his release with two-thirds of his sentence unserved would not provide just punishment.

On appeal Fields insists that the district judge too narrowly defined what constitutes an extraordinary and compelling reason for compassionate release. But he does not contend with the judge's conclusion that the § 3553(a) factors weighed against his early release. This is an independent and sufficient ground for denying compassionate release, irrespective of whether Fields presented an extraordinary and compelling reason. *See United States v. Rucker*, 27 F.4th 560, 563 (7th Cir. 2022). "One good reason for denying a motion such as [Fields's] is enough." *United States v. Ugbah*, 4 F.4th 595, 598 (7th Cir. 2021). Because Fields does not challenge this ground on appeal, he forfeits any argument that the district judge abused his discretion when he denied the motion based in part on the § 3553(a) factors. *See Webster v. CDI Ind., LLC*, 917 F.3d 574, 578 (7th Cir. 2019); *United States v. Bryant*, 750 F.3d 642, 651 (7th Cir. 2014). To the extent Fields argues that the judge should have weighed his family circumstances differently, *see* 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(1), we decline to reweigh the factors on appeal because the judge applied the factors logically (including Fields's extensive criminal history and the lengthy term remaining on his sentence). *See United States v. Ambriz-Villa*, 28 F.4th 786, 791–92 (7th Cir. 2022).

AFFIRMED