

1 positions concerning the disputed issue in the case. The Court has taken the Joint Submission
2 under submission without oral argument.

3
4 **II.**

5 **BACKGROUND**

6 Plaintiff was born on February 23, 1965. [Administrative Record (“AR”) at 162, 169.] She
7 has past relevant work experience as a bench assembler and a store laborer. [AR at 23, 44, 46-
8 47.]

9 On August 27, 2013, plaintiff protectively filed an application for a period of disability and
10 DIB, and an application for SSI payments, alleging that she has been unable to work since June
11 7, 2013. [AR at 15, 162-68, 169-75.] After her applications were denied initially and upon
12 reconsideration, plaintiff timely filed a request for a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge
13 (“ALJ”). [AR at 15, 95.] A hearing was held on December 23, 2014, at which time plaintiff
14 appeared represented by an attorney, and testified on her own behalf. [AR at 30-50.] A
15 vocational expert (“VE”) also testified. [AR at 44-49.] On February 18, 2015, the ALJ issued a
16 decision concluding that plaintiff was not under a disability from June 7, 2013, the alleged onset
17 date, through February 18, 2015, the date of the decision. [AR at 15-24.] Plaintiff requested
18 review of the ALJ’s decision by the Appeals Council. [AR at 10-11.] When the Appeals Council
19 denied plaintiff’s request for review on July 6, 2016 [AR at 1-5], the ALJ’s decision became the
20 final decision of the Commissioner. See Sam v. Astrue, 550 F.3d 808, 810 (9th Cir. 2008) (per
21 curiam) (citations omitted). This action followed.

22
23 **III.**

24 **STANDARD OF REVIEW**

25 Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), this Court has authority to review the Commissioner’s
26 decision to deny benefits. The decision will be disturbed only if it is not supported by substantial
27 evidence or if it is based upon the application of improper legal standards. Berry v. Astrue, 622
28 F.3d 1228, 1231 (9th Cir. 2010) (citation omitted).

1 “Substantial evidence means more than a mere scintilla but less than a preponderance; it
2 is such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a
3 conclusion.” Carmickle v. Comm’r, Soc. Sec. Admin., 533 F.3d 1155, 1159 (9th Cir. 2008) (citation
4 and internal quotation marks omitted); Reddick v. Chater, 157 F.3d 715, 720 (9th Cir. 1998)
5 (same). When determining whether substantial evidence exists to support the Commissioner’s
6 decision, the Court examines the administrative record as a whole, considering adverse as well
7 as supporting evidence. Mayes v. Massanari, 276 F.3d 453, 459 (9th Cir. 2001) (citation omitted);
8 see Ryan v. Comm’r of Soc. Sec., 528 F.3d 1194, 1198 (9th Cir. 2008) (“[A] reviewing court must
9 consider the entire record as a whole and may not affirm simply by isolating a specific quantum
10 of supporting evidence.”) (citation and internal quotation marks omitted). “Where evidence is
11 susceptible to more than one rational interpretation, the ALJ’s decision should be upheld.” Ryan,
12 528 F.3d at 1198 (citation and internal quotation marks omitted); see Robbins v. Soc. Sec. Admin.,
13 466 F.3d 880, 882 (9th Cir. 2006) (“If the evidence can support either affirming or reversing the
14 ALJ’s conclusion, [the reviewing court] may not substitute [its] judgment for that of the ALJ.”)
15 (citation omitted).

16 17 IV.

18 THE EVALUATION OF DISABILITY

19 Persons are “disabled” for purposes of receiving Social Security benefits if they are unable
20 to engage in any substantial gainful activity owing to a physical or mental impairment that is
21 expected to result in death or which has lasted or is expected to last for a continuous period of at
22 least twelve months. 42 U.S.C. § 423(d)(1)(A); Drouin v. Sullivan, 966 F.2d 1255, 1257 (9th Cir.
23 1992).

24 25 A. THE FIVE-STEP EVALUATION PROCESS

26 The Commissioner (or ALJ) follows a five-step sequential evaluation process in assessing
27 whether a claimant is disabled. 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.1520, 416.920; Lester v. Chater, 81 F.3d 821,
28 828 n.5 (9th Cir. 1995), as amended April 9, 1996. In the first step, the Commissioner must

1 determine whether the claimant is currently engaged in substantial gainful activity; if so, the
2 claimant is not disabled and the claim is denied. Id. If the claimant is not currently engaged in
3 substantial gainful activity, the second step requires the Commissioner to determine whether the
4 claimant has a “severe” impairment or combination of impairments significantly limiting her ability
5 to do basic work activities; if not, a finding of nondisability is made and the claim is denied. Id.
6 If the claimant has a “severe” impairment or combination of impairments, the third step requires
7 the Commissioner to determine whether the impairment or combination of impairments meets or
8 equals an impairment in the Listing of Impairments (“Listing”) set forth at 20 C.F.R. part 404,
9 subpart P, appendix 1; if so, disability is conclusively presumed and benefits are awarded. Id. If
10 the claimant’s impairment or combination of impairments does not meet or equal an impairment
11 in the Listing, the fourth step requires the Commissioner to determine whether the claimant has
12 sufficient “residual functional capacity” to perform her past work; if so, the claimant is not disabled
13 and the claim is denied. Id. The claimant has the burden of proving that she is unable to
14 perform past relevant work. Drouin, 966 F.2d at 1257. If the claimant meets this burden, a
15 prima facie case of disability is established. Id. The Commissioner then bears the burden of
16 establishing that the claimant is not disabled, because she can perform other substantial gainful
17 work available in the national economy. Id. The determination of this issue comprises the fifth
18 and final step in the sequential analysis. 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.1520, 416.920; Lester, 81 F.3d at
19 828 n.5; Drouin, 966 F.2d at 1257.

21 **B. THE ALJ’S APPLICATION OF THE FIVE-STEP PROCESS**

22 At step one, the ALJ found that plaintiff had not engaged in substantial gainful activity since
23 June 7, 2013, the alleged onset date.² [AR at 17.] At step two, the ALJ concluded that plaintiff
24 has the severe impairments of hypertension; history of ventral hernia repair, status post repair;
25 history of intra-abdominal adhesions, status post adhesional lysis; and history of diverticulitis and
26

27 ² The ALJ concluded that plaintiff met the insured status requirements of the Social
28 Security Act through September 30, 2013. [AR at 17.]

1 diverting colostomy. [AR at 17-18.] At step three, the ALJ determined that plaintiff does not have
2 an impairment or a combination of impairments that meets or medically equals any of the
3 impairments in the Listing. [AR at 19.] The ALJ further found that plaintiff retained the residual
4 functional capacity (“RFC”)³ to perform light work as defined in 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.1567(b),
5 416.967(b),⁴ as follows:

6 [Plaintiff] is able to lift and carry 20 pounds occasionally, 10 pounds frequently; sit
7 for 6 hours out of an 8 hour workday; and stand or walk for 6 hours out of an 8 hour
8 day, all with normal breaks. [Plaintiff] can frequently climb stairs, ramps, ladders,
ropes, and scaffolds. She can frequently balance, stoop, kneel, crouch and crawl.

9 [AR at 20.] At step four, based on plaintiff’s RFC and the testimony of the VE, the ALJ concluded
10 that plaintiff is able to perform her past relevant work as a bench assembler. [AR at 23, 47.]
11 Accordingly, the ALJ determined that plaintiff was not disabled at any time from the alleged onset
12 date of June 7, 2013, through February 18, 2015, the date of the decision. [AR at 23-24.]

14 V.

15 THE ALJ’S DECISION

16 Plaintiff contends that the ALJ erred when she rejected the opinion of treating physician and
17 cardiologist, James Tran, M.D. [JS at 4.] As set forth below, the Court agrees with plaintiff and
18 remands for further proceedings.

20
21 ³ RFC is what a claimant can still do despite existing exertional and nonexertional
22 limitations. See Cooper v. Sullivan, 880 F.2d 1152, 1155 n.5 (9th Cir. 1989). “Between steps
23 three and four of the five-step evaluation, the ALJ must proceed to an intermediate step in which
the ALJ assesses the claimant’s residual functional capacity.” Massachi v. Astrue, 486 F.3d 1149,
1151 n.2 (9th Cir. 2007) (citation omitted).

24 ⁴ “Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying
25 of objects weighing up to 10 pounds. Even though the weight lifted may be very little, a job is in
26 this category when it requires a good deal of walking or standing, or when it involves sitting most
27 of the time with some pushing and pulling of arm or leg controls. To be considered capable of
28 performing a full or wide range of light work, you must have the ability to do substantially all of
these activities. If someone can do light work, we determine that he or she can also do sedentary
work, unless there are additional limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for
long periods of time.” 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.1567(b), 416.967(b).

1 **A. MEDICAL OPINIONS**

2 **1. Legal Standard**

3 “There are three types of medical opinions in social security cases: those from treating
4 physicians, examining physicians, and non-examining physicians.” Valentine v. Comm’r Soc. Sec.
5 Admin., 574 F.3d 685, 692 (9th Cir. 2009); see also 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.1502, 404.1527. “As a
6 general rule, more weight should be given to the opinion of a treating source than to the opinion
7 of doctors who do not treat the claimant.” Lester, 81 F.3d at 830; Garrison v. Colvin, 759 F.3d
8 995, 1012 (9th Cir. 2014) (citing Ryan, 528 F.3d at 1198); Turner v. Comm’r of Soc. Sec., 613
9 F.3d 1217, 1222 (9th Cir. 2010). “The opinion of an examining physician is, in turn, entitled to
10 greater weight than the opinion of a nonexamining physician.” Lester, 81 F.3d at 830; Ryan, 528
11 F.3d at 1198.

12 “[T]he ALJ may only reject a treating or examining physician’s uncontradicted medical
13 opinion based on clear and convincing reasons.” Carmickle, 533 F.3d at 1164 (citation and
14 internal quotation marks omitted); Widmark v. Barnhart, 454 F.3d 1063, 1066 (9th Cir. 2006).
15 “Where such an opinion is contradicted, however, it may be rejected for specific and legitimate
16 reasons that are supported by substantial evidence in the record.” Carmickle, 533 F.3d at 1164
17 (citation and internal quotation marks omitted); Ryan, 528 F.3d at 1198; Ghanim v. Colvin, 763
18 F.3d 1154, 1160-61 (9th Cir. 2014); Garrison, 759 F.3d at 1012. The ALJ can meet the requisite
19 specific and legitimate standard “by setting out a detailed and thorough summary of the facts and
20 conflicting clinical evidence, stating his interpretation thereof, and making findings.” Reddick, 157
21 F.3d at 725. The ALJ “must set forth his own interpretations and explain why they, rather than the
22 [treating or examining] doctors’, are correct.” Id.

23 Although the opinion of a non-examining physician “cannot by itself constitute substantial
24 evidence that justifies the rejection of the opinion of either an examining physician or a treating
25 physician,” Lester, 81 F.3d at 831, state agency physicians are “highly qualified physicians,
26 psychologists, and other medical specialists who are also experts in Social Security disability
27 evaluation.” 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.1527(e)(2)(i), 416.927(e)(2)(i); Soc. Sec. Ruling 96-6p; Bray v.
28 Astrue, 554 F.3d 1219, 1221, 1227 (9th Cir. 2009) (the ALJ properly relied “in large part on the

1 DDS physician’s assessment” in determining the claimant’s RFC and in rejecting the treating
2 doctor’s testimony regarding the claimant’s functional limitations). Reports of non-examining
3 medical experts “may serve as substantial evidence when they are supported by other evidence
4 in the record and are consistent with it.” Andrews v. Shalala, 53 F.3d 1035, 1041 (9th Cir. 1995).

5
6 **2. Dr. Tran**

7 Dr. Tran, plaintiff’s treating cardiologist, prepared a “Cardiac Residual Functional Capacity
8 Questionnaire” (“Questionnaire”) on December 11, 2014. [AR at 339-43.] In the Questionnaire,
9 Dr. Tran indicated he had been treating plaintiff since August 2014. [AR at 339.] He diagnosed
10 plaintiff with a New York Heart Association (“NYHA”) functional classification of II-III. [Id.]
11 According to plaintiff, NYHA classifications are “functional classifications for the severity of heart
12 failure”: Class II denotes a slight limitation of physical activity from symptoms such as fatigue,
13 palpitation, or shortness of breath, while Class III denotes a marked limitation. (JS at 4 n.2). In
14 support of his diagnosis, Dr. Tran noted that plaintiff’s treadmill test had to be stopped after 30
15 seconds due to her “fatigue, arthritis, [and] debilitating weakness”; and that her seven prior
16 surgeries have made her “weak and emotionally fragile.” [AR at 339.] He further noted the
17 following: “stress [illegible⁵] is a major factor” in bringing on plaintiff’s symptoms, and she is
18 incapable of even low-stress jobs; plaintiff’s physical symptoms and limitations cause emotional
19 difficulties such as depression or chronic anxiety; she experiences “probable emotional stress with
20 coping with colostomy”⁶; and her cardiac symptoms would constantly interfere with her attention
21 and concentration even if she was performing simple work. [AR at 340.] Dr. Tran opined that
22 plaintiff can walk less than 1 block without needing to rest or experiencing severe pain; can sit or
23 stand/walk less than two hours; needs to shift positions at will from sitting, standing or walking; will

24
25 ⁵ The parties appear to agree that the word in parentheses is “emotional.” [See JS at 5, 9.]

26 ⁶ The Court notes that although Dr. Tran indicated plaintiff had “[p]robable emotional stress with
27 coping with colostomy” [AR at 340], it appears that although she “had a colostomy bag for a while
28 . . . they finally removed that, so she doesn’t have that anymore.” [AR at 34; see also AR at 255
(September 11, 2013, treatment record noting a prior history of “diverticulitis with diverting
colostomy and then closure”).] It is unclear when the colostomy was closed.

1 frequently need unscheduled one-hour breaks during an eight-hour workday; can rarely lift less
2 than ten pounds and can never lift above ten pounds; can never twist, stoop, crouch/squat, or
3 climb ladders or stairs; is likely to have good and bad days; would be absent more than four days
4 per month; arthritis limits the use of her harms, hands, and fingers; and “[e]motional stress limits
5 any work.” [AR at 340-43.]

6 The ALJ gave “very little weight” to the opinions of Dr. Tran:

7 Dr. Tran did not even see [plaintiff] until August 2014 more than a year after the
8 alleged onset date. In addition, although he states that she had a positive treadmill
9 test, these statements are not supported by accompanying treatment notes or any
10 diagnostic testing reports which show negative results. In fact, Dr. Tran’s notes
11 have a question mark by congestive heart failure, which would indicate he was
12 unsure if she had this condition. He also reported that the echocardiogram was
negative in October 2014. I further note [plaintiff] never alleged a heart condition.
The treatment notes also include a two-dimensional echocardiogram which showed
normal left ventricular function with . . . no regional wall motion abnormalities. Thus,
I find his statements extreme and unsupported by the evidence of record and his
treatment notes.

13 [AR at 22 (citations omitted).] The ALJ gave “considerable weight to the [November 2013 and
14 January 2014] opinions of the state agency medical consultants that [plaintiff] does not have a
15 severe impairment or that any impairment that was severe did not last for the required 12 month
16 period.” [AR at 21.]

17 Plaintiff contends that the ALJ failed to adequately consider Dr. Tran’s opinion regarding
18 plaintiff’s mental health and the effect that stress has on plaintiff’s physical symptoms in a work-
19 related setting and on her ability to work. [JS at 5-6.] She notes that the ALJ’s rejection of Dr.
20 Tran’s opinion focused “solely on the cardiac component” of her condition, and that the ALJ made
21 no reference to plaintiff’s inability to tolerate even a “low stress” job because of the role stress
22 plays in “bringing on” her symptoms. [JS at 6; AR at 340.]

23 Defendant responds that Dr. Tran began treating plaintiff in August 2014 and his opinion,
24 therefore, does not reflect that plaintiff has a mental condition that has lasted for (or will last) a
25 consecutive twelve months, or that commenced prior to her date last insured.⁷ [JS at 10.]

27 ⁷ Dr. Tran did opine that plaintiff’s “impairments lasted or can be expected to last at least
28 twelve months.” [AR at 341.]

1 Defendant also contends that plaintiff has not met her burden of proving that she has a severe
2 mental impairment; and that the ALJ properly found that Dr. Tran’s statements were extreme and
3 unsupported by the evidence of record and his treatment notes. [*Id.* at 10 (citing AR at 22).]

4 Although somewhat unclear, the Court determines that plaintiff is not only arguing that she
5 has a mental health impairment that the ALJ failed to specifically consider, but that she is also
6 generally arguing that “the ALJ erred by articulating legally insufficient reasons for rejecting Dr.
7 Tran’s opinion.” [JS at 24.] Moreover, Dr. Tran’s opinions regarding plaintiff’s inability to handle
8 stress in the workplace, and the effect of stress (emotional or otherwise) on her symptoms of
9 fatigue and shortness of breath, generally were incorporated into Dr. Tran’s findings regarding
10 plaintiff’s functional limitations. Thus, even though the ALJ did not specifically accept or reject Dr.
11 Tran’s opinions regarding the effect of stress on plaintiff’s ability to work, the Court will consider
12 whether the ALJ properly gave Dr. Tran’s overall opinion “little weight.”

13
14 **a. Onset of Treatment with Dr. Tran and Failure to Allege a Heart**
15 **Condition**

16 The ALJ rejected Dr. Tran’s opinion because he did not first treat plaintiff until August 2014,
17 “more than a year after the alleged onset date” of June 7, 2013. [AR at 22.] The record reflects,
18 however, that plaintiff complained of shortness of breath to her treating physician, Chung The Bui,
19 M.D., in April 2014 [AR at 318], *i.e.*, *less than* one year after the alleged onset date, and in May,
20 June, July, and August 2014, she complained to him of palpitations. [AR at 314-17.] Dr. Bui, who
21 treated plaintiff from April 16, 2014, to December 8, 2014, referred plaintiff to cardiologist Dr. Tran
22 in approximately June 2014. [*See* AR at 315-17, 335.]

23 The ALJ also rejected Dr. Tran’s opinion because plaintiff “never alleged a heart condition.”
24 [AR at 22.] The ALJ completely misstates the record. Notwithstanding the fact that plaintiff did
25 not first visit Dr. Tran until August 2014, on October 22, 2013, when she completed her Pain
26 Questionnaire, plaintiff reported that she had been experiencing “aching and crushing” “chest pain
27 and back pain” since January 2013 -- well before September 30, 2013, her date last insured for
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1 purposes of DIB benefits. [AR at 202.] In her “Function Report - Adult,” also completed on
2 October 22, 2013, plaintiff reported that she “frequently” experienced pain and fatigue⁸ that
3 prevented her from “doing anything.” [AR at 205.] Additionally, the “Disability Report - Adult”
4 completed by the Administration clearly reflects that plaintiff alleged heart problems and/or chest
5 pain in her application for benefits. For instance, in the section detailing medical conditions,
6 plaintiff indicated that heart problems and chest pain limit her ability to work [AR at 194], and in
7 the section detailing the medical conditions that Dr. Hai Pham treated her for between August
8 2010 and October 2013, plaintiff indicated “heart problems.” Indeed, in the records produced by
9 Dr. Pham, there is a June 10, 2013, ECG test strip, reflecting that plaintiff’s ECG results were
10 “*BORDERLINE ABNORMAL* EXERCISE CAUTION” and noting that an “old infarction is
11 suspected.” [AR at 246.] Moreover, the state agency consultants in November 2013 and January
12 2014, to whom the ALJ gave “considerable weight,” both acknowledged that plaintiff was alleging
13 “heart problems and chest pain,” but both noted that “*with the available information* we could not
14 determine a disabling impairment.” [AR at 56, 70.] Both of these record reviews were conducted
15 without the benefit of Dr. Bui’s and/or Dr. Tran’s 2014 treatment records. Therefore, the ALJ’s
16 decision to give considerable weight to their opinions that plaintiff “does not have a severe
17 impairment or that any impairment that was severe did not last for the required 12 month period,”
18 was error because their opinions were based on an incomplete record.

19 Based on the foregoing, these were not specific and legitimate reasons to discount Dr.
20 Tran’s opinions in favor of the reviewing consultant’s opinions.

21
22 **b. Treadmill Test and Congestive Heart Failure**

23 The ALJ stated that plaintiff’s positive treadmill test on October 9, 2014, was not supported
24 by accompanying treatment notes or any diagnostic testing reports that showed negative results.
25 [AR at 22.] He also stated that because Dr. Tran had “put a question mark by congestive heart
26

27 ⁸ It appears that Dr. Bui was concerned enough about plaintiff’s complaints of fatigue and
28 shortness of breath that he referred her to a cardiologist. [AR at 335.]

1 failure” in his treatment notes [see AR at 331], this was an indication that Dr. Tran “was unsure
2 if [plaintiff] had this condition.” [AR at 22.] Neither of these reasons is specific and legitimate.

3 First, during the “exercise test,” plaintiff “ran slowly” for 30 seconds, at which point the test
4 was stopped due to “[f]atigue . . . ARTHRITIS AT HEEL R>L.” [AR at 335.] It seems that any
5 “negative results” reflected on Dr. Tran’s “Exercise Stress Test Report,” therefore, arose in large
6 part from the need to stop the test after 30 seconds due to plaintiff’s fatigue and pain in her heels
7 when she ran slowly for that time period on the treadmill. [Id.] Dr. Tran himself deemed this an
8 “[e]quivocal stress test.” [Id.] Thus, the results on the treadmill test are not necessarily reflective
9 of the *lack* of a heart problem and, indeed, the symptoms that caused the test to be stopped after
10 30 seconds -- fatigue and debilitating weakness -- were identified by Dr. Tran as themselves being
11 a clinical indication of such a problem. [AR at 339.]

12 Second, although Dr. Tran put a question mark next to CHF (congestive heart failure) on
13 his September 8, 2014, treatment note, the ALJ failed to mention the rest of Dr. Tran’s note which
14 states in its entirety: “(1) CHF? Sob/dyspnea [shortness of breath/dyspnea] = need eval for CHF.”
15 [AR at 331.] While true, therefore, that this was an indication that Dr. Tran “was unsure” if plaintiff
16 had congestive heart failure, Dr. Tran certainly had not ruled this out as a diagnosis (neither had
17 he opined that it was the only possible diagnosis), and indeed, he indicated that further evaluation
18 for this specific condition was necessary. Moreover, even if CHF had not been specifically
19 diagnosed as the *cause* of plaintiff’s shortness of breath, fatigue, and/or chest pain, Dr. Tran still
20 found that plaintiff’s symptoms indicated heart failure that he classified as NYHA Class II to III, that
21 stress (emotional or otherwise) was a “major factor” in bringing on plaintiff’s symptoms, and that
22 even low work stress could not be tolerated. [AR at 340.]

23 Based on the foregoing, these were not specific and legitimate reasons for discounting Dr.
24 Tran’s opinions.

25
26 **B. CONCLUSION**

27 Because the ALJ did not provide specific and legitimate reasons for discounting Dr. Tran’s
28

1 opinions regarding plaintiff's heart problems generally, and the state agency consultants did not
2 have the benefit of the later medical evidence from Dr. Bui and Dr. Tran, the Court cannot
3 conclude that the ALJ's decision to give more weight to the opinions of the state agency
4 consultants was supported by substantial evidence. Andrews, 53 F.3d at 1041 (reports of
5 non-examining medical experts "may serve as substantial evidence when they are supported by
6 other evidence in the record and are consistent with it").

7 Remand is warranted on this issue.

8 9 VI.

10 **REMAND FOR FURTHER PROCEEDINGS**

11 The Court has discretion to remand or reverse and award benefits. McAllister v. Sullivan,
12 888 F.2d 599, 603 (9th Cir. 1989). Where no useful purpose would be served by further
13 proceedings, or where the record has been fully developed, it is appropriate to exercise this
14 discretion to direct an immediate award of benefits. See Lingenfelter v. Astrue, 504 F.3d 1028,
15 1041 (9th Cir. 2007); Benecke v. Barnhart, 379 F.3d 587, 595-96 (9th Cir. 2004). Where there are
16 outstanding issues that must be resolved before a determination can be made, and it is not clear
17 from the record that the ALJ would be required to find plaintiff disabled if all the evidence were
18 properly evaluated, remand is appropriate. See Benecke, 379 F.3d at 593-96.

19 In this case, there are outstanding issues that must be resolved before a final determination
20 can be made. In an effort to expedite these proceedings and to avoid any confusion or
21 misunderstanding as to what the Court intends, the Court will set forth the scope of the remand
22 proceedings. First, because the ALJ failed to provide specific and legitimate reasons for
23 discounting the opinions of Dr. Tran, the ALJ on remand shall reassess the medical evidence of
24 record, including all of Dr. Tran's opinions. In assessing the medical opinion evidence, the ALJ
25 must explain the weight afforded to each opinion and provide legally adequate reasons for any
26 portion of the opinion that the ALJ discounts or rejects, including a legally sufficient explanation
27 for crediting one doctor's opinion over any of the others. Finally, if warranted, the ALJ shall
28

1 reassess plaintiff's RFC and determine at step four, with the assistance of a VE if necessary,
2 whether plaintiff is capable of performing her past relevant work as a bench assembler.⁹ If plaintiff
3 is not so capable, or if the ALJ determines to make an alternative finding at step five, then the ALJ
4 shall proceed to step five and determine, with the assistance of a VE if necessary, whether there
5 are jobs existing in significant numbers in the regional and national economy that plaintiff can still
6 perform.

7
8 **VII.**

9 **CONCLUSION**

10 **IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that: (1) plaintiff's request for remand is **granted**; (2) the
11 decision of the Commissioner is **reversed**; and (3) this action is **remanded** to defendant for further
12 proceedings consistent with this Memorandum Opinion.

13 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Clerk of the Court serve copies of this Order and the
14 Judgment herein on all parties or their counsel.

15 **This Memorandum Opinion and Order is not intended for publication, nor is it**
16 **intended to be included in or submitted to any online service such as Westlaw or Lexis.**

17 

18 DATED: July 20, 2017

19 _____
20 PAUL L. ABRAMS
21 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

22
23
24
25
26 _____
27 ⁹ Nothing herein is intended to disrupt the ALJ's step four finding that plaintiff is unable to
28 perform her past relevant work as a store laborer.