

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR  
THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA**

JOSE GOMEZ MARTINEZ,	)	
Petitioner,	)	
	)	
v.	)	CIV-25-1235-PRW
	)	
DON JONES, et al.,	)	
Respondents.	)	

**RESPONDENTS' OBJECTION TO REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Respectfully Submitted,

ROBERT J. TROESTER  
United States Attorney

s/ Scott Maule  
Scott Maule (OBA 31760)  
Assistant U.S. Attorney  
United States Attorney's Office  
Western District of Oklahoma  
210 Park Avenue, Suite 400  
Oklahoma City, OK 73102  
(405) 553-8832/8700  
scott.maule@usdoj.gov

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES.....	ii-iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
ARGUMENT.....	3
I.    The Plain Language of § 1225 Applies to Petitioner.....	3
A. Applicants for Admission... Seek Admission.....	4
B. Petitioner’s Applications for Asylum and Cancellation Make Clear He Is Seeking Admission.....	10
II.   The Title, Structure, and History of § 1225 Are Inconsistent with the R&R’s Construction.....	13
A. The Title and Structure of § 1225 Support the Respondents’ Readings ..	13
B. The R&R’s Conclusion the § 1225 Is Limited to “Arriving” Noncitizens Is Inconsistent with the Purpose of the IIRIRA .....	16
C. Prior Regulatory Commentary Is Consistent with Respondents’ Reading .....	17
III.  The Laken Riley Act Does Not Render § 1225(b)(2)(A) Superfluous.....	18
CONCLUSION .....	22

**TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**

**Cases**

*Am. Car Rental Ass'n v. Humphreys*,  
2025 WL 1758898 (D. Colo. May 29, 2025) ..... 19

*Att'y Gen. of United States v. Wynn*,  
104 F.4th 348 (D.C. Cir. 2024) ..... 6

*Barton v. Barr*,  
590 U.S. 222 (2020) ..... 20

*Cabanas v. Bondi*,  
2025 WL 3171331 (S.D. Tex. Nov. 13, 2025) ..... 7, 18, 21, 22

*Chavez v. Noem*, Case No. 3:25-cv-02325-CAB,  
2025 WL 2730228 (S.D. Cal. Sept. 24, 2025) ..... 16

*Coronado v. DHS*, 25-cv-831,  
2025 WL 3628229 (S.D. Ohio Dec. 15, 2025) ..... 9-10, 10

*Djong v. Mayorkas*, No. 24-CV-00475-CNS,  
2024 WL 5089985 (D. Colo. Dec. 12, 2024) ..... 11

*Dubin v. United States*,  
599 U.S. 110 (2023) ..... 5

*Fla. Dep't of Revenue v. Piccadilly Cafeterias, Inc.*,  
554 U.S. 33 (2008) ..... 13-14

*Guidry v. Sheet Metal Workers Nat. Pension Fund*,  
493 U.S. 365 (1990) ..... 19

*Hernandez Cruz v. Noem*, 8:25-cv-02566SB-MAA,  
2025 WL 3482630 (C.D. Cal. Dec. 2, 2025) ..... 21

*Jennings v. Rodriguez*,  
583 U.S. 281 (2018) ..... 5

*Martinez Diaz v. Holt*, No. CIV-25-1179-J,  
2025 WL 3296310 (W.D. Okla. Nov. 26, 2025) ..... 11, 12

*Matter of Lemus-Losa*,  
25 I & N. Dec. 734 (BIA 2012) ..... 6, 7

*Matter of Yajure Hurtado*,  
29 I. & N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025) ..... 22

*Medina-Herrera v. Noem*, No. CIV-25-1203-J,  
2025 WL 3460946 (W.D. Okla. Dec. 2, 2025) ..... 12

*Mejia Olalde v. Noem*, No. 1:25-cv-00168-JMD,  
2025 WL 3131942 (E.D. Mo. Nov. 10, 2025) ..... 3-4, 7, 8

*Melgar v. Bondi*, 8:25CV555,  
2025 WL 3496721 (D. Neb. Dec. 5, 2025) ..... 18

*Oliveira v. Patterson*, No. 6:25-cv-01463,  
2025 WL 3095972 (W.D. La. Nov. 4, 2025) ..... 17

*P.R.S. v. Streeval*, No. 4:25-CV-330,  
2025 WL 3269947 (M.D. Ga. Nov. 24, 2025) ..... 12

*Pa. Dep't of Corr. v. Yeskey*,  
524 U.S. 206 (1998) ..... 14

*Rimini St., Inc. v. Oracle USA, Inc.*,  
586 U.S. 334 (2019) ..... 20

*Rojas v Olson*, Case No. 25-cv-1437-bhl,  
2025 WL 3033967 (E.D. Wis. Oct. 30, 2025) ..... 7, 10-11

*Russello v. United States*,  
464 U.S. 16 (1983) ..... 15

*Sandoval v. Acuna*, Case No. 6:25-cv-01467,  
2025 WL 3048926 ..... 5, 14, 16-17, 21

*Sosa v. Alvarez-Machain*,  
542 U.S. 692 (2004) ..... 15

*Tex. Dep't of Hous. & Cmty. Affs. v. Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.*,  
576 U.S. 519 (2015) ..... 5-6

*Torres v. Barr*,  
976 F.3d 918 (9th Cir. 2020) ..... 16

*Ugarte-Arenas v. Olson*, No. 25-C-1721,  
2025 WL 3514451 (E.D. Wis. Dec. 8, 2025) ..... 2, 10

*Valencia v. Chestnut*, 1:25-cv-01550 WBS JDP,  
2025 WL 3205133 (Nov. 17, 2025) ..... 22

*Vargas Lopez v. Trump*, No. 25-CV-526,  
2025 WL 2780351 ..... 4

**Statutes**

8 U.S.C. § 1101 ..... 9, 11  
8 U.S.C. § 1159 ..... 10  
8 U.S.C. § 1182 ..... 9, 20, 21  
8 U.S.C. § 1225 ..... 1-5, 8, 9, 12-23  
8 U.S.C. § 1226 ..... 11, 17-22  
8 U.S.C. § 1229b ..... 3, 14, 11

**Other**

8 C.F.R. § 1209.2 ..... 10  
62 Fed. Reg. 10312, 10323 (Mar. 6, 1997) ..... 17

## **RESPONDENTS' OBJECTION TO REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Respondents *respectfully* object to the Report and Recommendation (R&R) entered on December 16, 2025 (Doc. 34).

While this objection expressly reasserts and does not waive the arguments set forth in the Response (Doc. 16), it focuses on the R&R's failure to apply the plain meaning of § 1225(b)(2)(A) and instead engage in a broader structural analysis that is inconsistent with the text, title, and purpose of § 1225 and that creates more ambiguity than it purports to resolve.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The R&R asserts that a noncitizen who, prior to apprehension, *applied* for asylum and then *applied* for cancellation of removal to obtain legal residency, is somehow not *seeking* admission. But that conclusion defies common sense and ordinary language. Moreover, it is a contention that is strikingly absent from the Petition and reply brief.

The R&R finds that the text of § 1225(b)(2)(A) is ambiguous and then evaluates the statutory title, structure, and purpose to conclude that § 1225(b)(2)(A) applies only to “arriving noncitizens actively seeking admission at or near the border or port of entry.” R&R at 17. In so doing, the R&R departs from the plain language of the statute. Section 1225 is unambiguously *not* limited to “arriving” noncitizens “at or near the border.” Several provisions make that clear. For instance, the very first provision of § 1225 deems noncitizens “present in the United States”—without any temporal or geographic limitations—to be “an applicant for admission.” 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1). As such, at the outset, the R&R reads limitations into the provision that do not exist and are contrary to

the express language.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the R&R reads an “arriving” and “at or near the border” limitation into “applicant for admission.”

Further, § 1225(b)(1)(A)(iii)(II) provides for *expedited* removal proceedings for certain noncitizens “physically present in the United States” for up to “2-year[s],” without any proximity to the border requirement. A noncitizen residing in the interior of the country for more than a year is hardly an “arriving” noncitizen seeking admission at the border. Again, the R&R’s reading of § 1225 is inconsistent with that express language.

The difference is not trivial. Limiting § 1225 to “arriving aliens” will have serious implications for other immigration enforcement. For instance, under § 1225, DHS has exercised its unreviewable authority to designate noncitizens that have entered illegally and been present in the country for up to two years (i.e., not “arriving”) for expedited removal under § 1225(b)(1)(A)(iii). *See* Designating Aliens for Expedited Removal, 90 FR 8139 (Jan. 24, 2025). As such, the R&R’s structural limitation on the reach of § 1225 not only misreads the plain language of the statute but also impedes immigration enforcement more generally.

Resolution of the Petition begins and ends with the plain text of § 1225(b)(2)(A).

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<sup>1</sup> *Ugarte-Arenas v. Olson*, No. 25-C-1721, 2025 WL 3514451, at \*4 (E.D. Wis. Dec. 8, 2025) (“But the definition of ‘applicant for admission’ does not contain any temporal or geographic limitations. Moreover, it would make little sense to reward those undocumented immigrants who successfully evaded detection upon arrival in the United States and traveled into the interior of the country with discretionary release, while mandating the detention of those individuals who were not so successful or who sought entry at a border or port of entry. Construing the statute in such a way would incentivize illegal entry into the country on a massive scale.”).

Petitioner is a noncitizen present in the United States, who was and is seeking admission, and a detention officer determined he is not entitled to be admitted beyond a doubt. On that basis, he is not entitled to a bond hearing and the Petition should be denied.

### ARGUMENT

The R&R starts by finding that the “statutory text does not provide a definitive answer as to what it means to be present without admittance where, as here, the noncitizen has already entered and spent many years residing in the United States.” R&R at 14. While that assessment is not evident from the language of the provision, the R&R nonetheless proceeds to evaluate the title, structure, and legislative history of § 1225, with a particular focus on what it means to be “seeking admission” (while effectively ignoring the “applicant for admission” deeming provision). The R&R is wrong at each step.

#### I. The Plain Language of § 1225(b)(2)(A) Applies to Petitioner

Section 1225(b)(2)(A) provides that:

[I]n the case of an alien who is an **applicant for admission**, if the examining immigration officer determines that an alien **seeking admission** is not clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to be admitted, the alien shall be detained for a proceeding under section 1229a of this title. (emphasis added)

While not plainly stated or addressed, the R&R must concede that Petitioner is an “applicant for admission.” The deeming provision of § 1225(a)(1) expressly states that “[a]n alien present in the United States who has not been admitted ... **shall be deemed** ... an applicant for admission.” 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1) (emphasis added). Petitioner contends he has been present in the country since 2001. Petition ¶ 1. Accordingly, he is an “applicant for admission.” *Mejia Olalde v. Noem*, No. 1:25-cv-00168-JMD, 2025 WL 3131942 at \*3

(E.D. Mo. Nov. 10, 2025) (“[T]he statute *defines* [petitioner] as seeking admission ... Because [petitioner] is an alien, present in the United States, who has not been admitted, the law defines him to be an applicant for admission. He is thus seeking admission.”); *Vargas Lopez v. Trump*, No. 25-CV-526, 2025 WL 2780351, \*9 (D. Neb. Sept. 30, 2025) (“just because [petitioner] illegally remained in this country for years does not mean that he is suddenly not an ‘applicant for admission’ under § 1225(b)(2)”).

The R&R does not (and cannot) really contest that point. Instead, despite its emphasis on the statutory title, structure, and history of § 1225, a close reading of the R&R reveals that it actually rests on the purported limitation of “seeking admission” in § 1225(b)(2)(A) [bolded above] and associated reliance on Judge Jones’ decision that rests on that same basis. *See* R&R at 16 (citing *Escarcega v. Olson*, No. CIV-25-1129-J, 2025 WL 3243438 (W.D. Okla. Nov. 20, 2025)<sup>2</sup>). Put differently, the R&R contends that “seeking admission” must mean some additional steps than merely being an “applicant for admission,” and using context and history, construes “seeking admission” to limit the provision to noncitizens seeking admission at the border. But that conclusion effectively nullifies the “present in the United States” deeming provision of § 1225(a)(1).

**A. Applicants for Admission ... Seek Admission**

The R&R’s reliance on “seeking admission” to read in geographic and temporal

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<sup>2</sup> Although the R&R relies on *Escarcega*, that opinion did *not* endorse the R&R’s claim of ambiguity and subsequent structural analysis. To the contrary, it held that there was no ambiguity and that “seeking admission” limited the application of § 1225(b)(2)(A). In contrast, the R&R inverts that analysis and contends that the “INA’s overall context” “limits the scope of the terms ‘applicant for admission’ and ‘seeking admission.’” R&R at 14.

limitations fails to give effect to the plain language of the statute and defies canons of interpretation. Indeed, the Supreme Court has treated § 1225(b)(2)(A) as applying to “*all applicants for admission* not covered by § 1225(b)(1).” *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281, 287 (2018) (emphasis added); *see also Sandoval v. Acuna*, Case No. 6:25-cv-01467, 2025 WL 3048926, \*5 n.5 (W.D. La. Oct. 31, 2025) (“The fact that Petitioner may have lacked the subjective intent to ever apply for admission does not prevent her from being categorized as an “applicant for admission” under § 1225. For this Court to hold otherwise would clearly contravene the plain statutory language and Congress’s intent.”).

Statutory language “is known by the company it keeps.” *Dubin v. United States*, 599 U.S. 110, 124 (2023) (quoting *McDonnell v. United States*, 579 U.S. 550, 569 (2016)). Section 1225(b)(2)(A) requires the detention of an “applicant for admission, if the examining immigration officer determines that [the] alien *seeking admission* is not clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to be admitted.” (emphasis added). The statutory text and context show that being an “applicant for admission” is a means of “seeking admission.” In other words, every “applicant for admission” is inherently and necessarily “seeking admission,” at least absent a choice to withdraw their applications for admission or seek voluntary departure. No additional affirmative step is necessary.

Section 1225(a)(3) confirms this by providing that all noncitizens “who are applicants for admission or *otherwise seeking admission* ... shall be inspected by immigration officers.” (emphasis added). The word “[o]therwise” means “in a different way or manner . . . .” *Tex. Dep’t of Hous. & Cmty. Affs. v. Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.*, 576 U.S. 519, 535 (2015) (quoting Webster’s Third New International Dictionary

1598 (1971)); *see also Att’y Gen. of United States v. Wynn*, 104 F.4th 348, 354 (D.C. Cir. 2024) (same); *Villarreal v. R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.*, 839 F.3d 958, 963-64 (11th Cir. 2016) (en banc) (“The phrase ‘or otherwise’ operates as a catchall: the specific items that precede it are *meant* to be subsumed by what comes after the ‘or otherwise.’” *Kleber v. CareFusion Corp.*, 914 F.3d 480, 482-83 (7th Cir. 2019) (same); *see also* Black’s Law Dictionary 1101 (6th ed. 1990) (“Otherwise. In a different manner; in another way, or in other ways”). Being an “applicant for admission” is thus a particular “way or manner” of seeking admission, such that any alien who is an “applicant for admission” *is* “seeking admission” for purposes of Section 1225(b)(2)(A).

“Seeking admission” is thus ‘a term of art’ that includes not only aliens who “entered the United States with visas or other entry documents before their presence became lawful” but also aliens who “entered unlawfully or [were] paroled into the United States but were deemed constructive applicants for admission by operation of [INA §] 235(a)(1) . . . .” *Matter of Lemus-Losa*, 25 I & N. Dec. 734, 743 n.6 (BIA 2012) (emphases omitted). As a result, “many people who are not *actually* requesting permission to enter the United States in the ordinary sense are nevertheless deemed to be ‘seeking admission’ under the immigration laws.” *Id.* at 743. For example, an alien who previously unlawfully entered the United States and never is admitted, departs, and subsequently submits a literal application for admission to the United States—*e.g.*, obtaining travel documents, such as a visa, and presenting at a port of entry for inspection—is deemed to be “*again* seek[ing] admission” to the United States. *Id.* at 743-44 & n.6 (emphasis added) (quoting and

discussing 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)(i)(I)-(II)). Mere presence without admission *is* seeking admission “by operation of law.” *Id.*

The everyday meaning of the statutory terms also supports this reading. One may “seek” something without “applying” for it—for example, one who is “seeking” happiness is not “applying” for it. But one *applying* for something necessarily is *seeking* it. *Accord Mejia Olalde*, 2025 WL 3131942, at \*3 (“To ‘seek’ is a synonym of to ‘apply’ for.”). *Compare* Webster’s New World College Dictionary (4th ed.) at 69 (“apply” means “To make a formal request (*to* someone *for* something)”), *with id.* at 1298 (“seek” means “to request, ask for”). For example, a person who is “applying” for a job or admission to college is “seeking” the job or admission to the college. *See* The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 63 (1980) (“American Heritage Dictionary”) (“apply” means “[t]o request or *seek* employment, acceptance, or *admission*” (emphasis added)). Likewise, an alien who is “applying” for admission to the United States (*i.e.*, an “applicant for admission”) necessarily is “seeking admission” to the United States. *Accord Rojas v Olson*, Case No. 25-cv-1437-bhl, 2025 WL 3033967, at \*8 (E.D. Wis. Oct. 30, 2025) (“seeking admission” is “best read as simply another way of referring to aliens who are applicants for admission”); *Cabanas v. Bondi*, 2025 WL 3171331, at \*5 (S.D. Tex. Nov. 13, 2025) (“There is no material disjunction—by the terms of the statute or the English language—between the concept of ‘applying’ for something and ‘seeking’ something. That

Petitioner has resided in the United States without valid permission for years thus doesn't render § 1225(b)(2)(A) inapplicable." (cleaned up).<sup>3</sup>

All of this confirms that neither the duration of a noncitizen's unlawful presence in the United States nor his distance from the border when apprehended alters the legal reality that an "applicant for admission" is "seeking admission." "Congress knows how to limit the scope" of the INA "geographically and temporally when it wants to." *Mejia Olalde*, 2025 WL 3131942, at \*4. For example, Section 1225(b)(1) may apply to aliens "arriving in the United States" or who "ha[ve] been physically present in the United States continuously for [a] 2-year period." 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1). So, "[i]f Congress meant to say that an alien no longer is 'seeking admission' after some amount of time in the United States, Congress knew how to do so." *Mejia Olalde*, 2025 WL 3131942, at \*4. It did not. To the contrary, Section 1225(a)(1)'s inclusion of *both* aliens "arriving" and those "present in the United States" confirms that *all* aliens who are not admitted are "applicants for admission," regardless of the length of their presence in the country.

None of this is to say, however, that "seeking admission" has no meaning beyond "applicant for admission." To the contrary, as § 1225(a)(3) shows, being an "applicant for admission" is only *one* "way or manner" of "seeking admission," not the exclusive way. For example, lawful permanent residents returning to the United States are not "applicants

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<sup>3</sup> Resort to the same dictionary relied upon by the R&R underscores this point. R&R at 16 (citing dictionary for "seeking"). Specifically, Merriam-Webster defines "applicant" as "one who applies." Applicant, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/applicant> (last visited December 19, 2025). Thus, an "applicant for admission" is one who *applies for* admission. Again, that accords with common understandings of plain language.

for admission,” but they still may be deemed to be “seeking admission” in some circumstances. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(13)(C). But for purposes of Section 1225(b)(2) and its regulation of “applicants for admission,” the statute unambiguously provides that an alien who is an “applicant for admission” is “seeking admission,” even if the alien is not engaged in some separate, affirmative act to obtain admission. Stowaways, too, are not “applicants for admission” but are still subject to inspection for admissibility. *See* 8 U.S.C. §§ 1182(a)(6)(D); 1225(a)(2). Moreover, given the complexity of the statutory scheme and IIRIRA’s changes, Congress’s use of the phrase “or otherwise seeking admission” ensured that all aliens would be subject to Section 1225(a)’s inspection requirement—including aliens who entered before IIRIRA’s effective date.

The R&R resists this conclusion by implicitly suggesting a new class of noncitizens; namely those that are in the country illegally, wanting to stay, and not departing, but that are somehow still not construed as “seeking” admission. But that creative construction finds no basis in the INA and leads to the absurd result that immigration officers cannot immediately detain a noncitizen residing in the United States without determining if they were somehow *actively* seeking admission (a standard not identified or defined in the INA or implementing regulations). Instead, the proper standard for the immigration officer is that which is plainly stated in the INA; namely, whether the noncitizen is “entitled to be admitted.” *See Coronado v. DHS*, 25-cv-831, 2025 WL 3628229, at \*9 (S.D. Ohio Dec. 15, 2025) (noting that Petitioner’s reading does not square with examining officer’s articulated obligations and stating “one would also assume that Congress would have provided some directives as to the contours of that subset, *e.g.*, factors to consider in

deciding whether a given ‘applicant for admission’ (an expressly defined term) is also ‘seeking admission.’ But Congress did not do so.”).

**B. Petitioner’s Applications for Asylum and Cancellation Make Clear He Is Seeking Admission**

Before he was detained, Petitioner applied for asylum and also sought cancellation of removal and legal residency with a 42B Application. *See* Response at 9. That is significant. Even if some additional step beyond being an “applicant for admission” is required, Petitioner has certainly done so. Thus, the R&R’s observation that “a noncitizen’s continued presence cannot constitute ‘seeking admission’ when that noncitizen *never attempted* to obtain lawful status,” even if true, does not apply to this case. R&R at 22.

Seeking asylum is ultimately seeking a form of admission. For noncitizens granted asylum, DHS “may adjust to the status of an alien **lawfully admitted** for permanent residence.” 8 U.S.C. § 1159(b) (emphasis added); 8 C.F.R. § 1209.2(a)(1) (“the status of any alien who has been granted asylum in the United States may be adjusted to that of an alien **lawfully admitted** for permanent residence, provided the alien ...” (emphasis added)). Thus, Petitioner *is* seeking a form of admission. *Coronado*, 2025 WL 3628229, at \*7 (“If more were required, Coronado has applied for asylum ... That application seeks to allow him to remain in this country—i.e., to be admitted.”); *Ugarte-Arenas*, 2025 WL 3514451, at \*4 (“As a matter of fact, however, it is clear Petitioner is seeking admission into the United States. He has filed an application for asylum and is thus seeking authorization to remain in the country. Petitioner is therefore an “alien seeking admission” into the United States subject to § 1225(b)(2)(A).”); *Rojas*, 2025 WL 3033967, at \*8 (“The

record confirms that Cirrus Rojas is now in fact seeking admission to the United States. His petition acknowledges that he has an application for asylum pending in the immigration court.”).

Likewise, Petitioner’s 42B Application seeks a form of admission. If successful, Petitioner’s status would be a legal resident and he would have a form of legal admission. 8 U.S.C. § 1229b(b) (“The Attorney General may cancel removal of, and adjust to the status of an alien **lawfully admitted** for permanent residence, an alien who is inadmissible or deportable from the United States if the alien ...”); 8 U.S.C.A. § 1101(a)(20) (“The term ‘**lawfully admitted** for permanent residence’ means the status of having been lawfully accorded the privilege of residing permanently in the United States as an immigrant in accordance with the immigration laws” (emphasis added)); *Djong v. Mayorkas*, No. 24-CV-00475-CNS, 2024 WL 5089985, at \*4 n.5 (D. Colo. Dec. 12, 2024) (“The INA allows immigration judges to adjust the status of certain noncitizens to lawful permanent resident during a removal proceeding to avoid removal.”). Again, Petitioner *is* seeking admission.

The R&R’s response on this point lacks analysis. Instead, it merely cites other cases. But those cases are inapposite, fail to add meaningful analysis, and are wrong. For example, the R&R cites to *Martinez Diaz v. Holt*, No. CIV-25-1179-J, 2025 WL 3296310, at \*2 n.3 (W.D. Okla. Nov. 26, 2025), for the assertion that the petitioner’s engagement to a citizen after his arrest is insufficient to be seeking admission. But that is not applicable here given Petitioner, himself, sought a form of admission on two different occasions prior to and when detained. But more importantly, *Martinez Diaz’s* analysis is grounded in the erroneous conclusion that one can only seek admission at the border. Specifically, it holds

that “the phrase ‘seeking admission’ only applies to noncitizens who are presently and actively seeking lawful entry into the United States ... at the border.” *Id.* at \* 2 (cleaned up). But § 1225(b)(2)(A)’s “seeking admission” does not include the phrase “at the border.” Like the R&R, *Martinez Diaz* reads in limitations that do not exist in the text.

By way of another example, the R&R also cites *Medina-Herrera v. Noem*, No. CIV-25-1203-J, 2025 WL 3460946, at \*4 (W.D. Okla. Dec. 2, 2025). But that decision in turn boot quotes and relies on *P.R.S. v. Streeval*, No. 4:25-CV-330, 2025 WL 3269947, at \*2 (M.D. Ga. Nov. 24, 2025), for the proposition that post-entry efforts do not constitute “seeking admission” because “[t]hey did not involve a preliminary examination by an examining immigration officer upon initial entry to the United States, nor did they occur in close temporal proximity to their initial arrival.” But that conclusion is an inapposite tautology unmoored from statutory text and the question at issue. It is true, of course, that a noncitizen seeking to evade legal authorities and illegally enter the country does not present himself for examination at the border, or within. Indeed, that is the essence of illegal immigration. But that observation does not address the question of what it means to be “seeking admission” when present in the country illegally—something the INA expressly contemplates. Indeed, § 1225(a)(1) provides that inadmissible noncitizens “present in the United States” are “deemed” an “applicant for admission.” The above cases do not grapple with that question or evaluate how seeking asylum and legal residency is somehow not a form of seeking admission.

Instead, those cases underscore that attempts to read “seeking admission” as something more than being an “applicant for admission” create greater ambiguity and

problems then they purport to resolve. Congress made it plain that an “applicant for admission” includes those “present in the country.” But the R&R and the cases it cites heighten “seeking admission” to such an undefined and unobtainable level that noncitizens “present in the country” can never be subject to § 1225(b)(2)(A), undoing the very meaning of an “applicant for admission.”

Finally, it bears repeating that, prior to his detention, Petitioner *sought admission* in two different forms (asylum and cancellation/legal residency), and yet the R&R contends Petitioner is somehow not “seeking admission.” That conclusion cannot be squared with ordinary meaning or common sense. Indeed, even Petitioner did not make that argument in his Petition or reply brief.

## **II. The Title, Structure, and History of § 1225 Are Inconsistent with the R&R’s Construction**

### **A. The Title and Structure of § 1225 Support the Respondents’ Reading**

Having decided that ambiguity exists, the R&R evaluates the title of the section and concludes that it limits the application of the section to “arriving aliens.” R&R at 15. That conclusion suffers several infirmities, including the notable omission *of the remainder of the title* and the resulting incongruence with—if not outright superfluity of—the text of the provision if accepted.

Before addressing those points, it is worth pausing to recognize that the resort to a statutory title is unnecessary unless there is ambiguity not found here and that a title should not limit the plain text. *Fla. Dep’t of Revenue v. Piccadilly Cafeterias, Inc.*, 554 U.S. 33, 47 (2008) (“To be sure, a subchapter heading cannot substitute for the operative text of the

statute.”); *Pa. Dep’t of Corr. v. Yeskey*, 524 U.S. 206, 212 (1998) (“The title of a statute cannot limit the plain meaning of the text.” (cleaned up)).

The title of § 1225 reads:

Inspection by immigration officers, *expedited removal of inadmissible arriving aliens*, **referral for hearing**.

The R&R focuses (and italicizes) only the reference to “*arriving aliens*.” R&R at 15. But that ignores the rest of the title. The first underlined portion is a reference to subpart (a)’s inspection obligations. The second italicized portion refers to the expedited proceedings of (b)(1) for “arriving aliens.” Importantly, however, the third **bolded** portion is a reference to the full removal proceedings under (b)(2)(A) for noncitizens present in the country. That is because “arriving aliens” under (b)(1) are subject to *expedited* removals and do not get full removal hearings pursuant to § 1229a. In contrast, noncitizens present in the country with arguably more established interests are provided *full* removal hearings. *See* § 1225(b)(2)(A) (“detained for a proceeding under section 1229a”); *Sandoval*, 2025 WL 3048926, at \*4 (“However, aliens subject to removal under § 1225(b)(2) are not subject to expedited removal but, rather, removal proceedings in the ordinary course pursuant to § 1229a.”). The Respondents’ reading accords with that difference, whereas the R&R’s exclusive focus on the “arriving” limitation cannot.

That same conclusion is also apparent from the subtitles within § 1225. The title of (b)(1) is “Inspection of aliens arriving in the United States and certain other aliens who have not been admitted or paroled.” In contrast, (b)(2) has *no* reference to arriving aliens. It reads “Inspection of other aliens.” Critically, the use of “arriving” in (b)(1) but not (b)(2)

must be given effect. The R&R’s interpretation renders the “arriving” in (b)(1) superfluous if all of § 1225 only applies to “arriving aliens.”

More generally, Congress used the phrase “arriving alien” throughout Section 1225. *See, e.g.* 8 U.S.C. §§ 1225(a)(2), (b)(1), (c)(1), (d)(2). The phrase distinguishes a noncitizen presently or recently “arriving” in the United States from other “applicants for admission” who, like Petitioner, have been in the United States without being admitted. But Congress *did not* use the word “arriving” to limit the scope of § 1225(b)(2)(A)’s mandatory-detention provision. Had Congress intended to limit § 1225(b)(2)(A)’s scope to “arriving” noncitizens, it would have used that phrase like it did in § 1225(b)(1), a mere one subsection prior. Or it could have included a general provision that the section only applies to arriving noncitizens. But Congress did not and that election to selectively use “arriving” must be given effect. *Russello v. United States*, 464 U.S. 16, 23 (1983) (“Where Congress includes particular language in one section of a statute but omits it in another section of the same Act, it is generally presumed that Congress acts intentionally and purposely in the disparate inclusion or exclusion.” (cleaned up)); *Sosa v. Alvarez-Machain*, 542 U.S. 692, 711 n.9 (2004) (concluding that “[t]he Government’s request that we read [a specific] phrase into [a statutory] exception, when it is clear that Congress knew how to specify [those words] when it wanted to, runs afoul of the usual rule that when the legislature uses certain language in one part of the statute and different language in another, the court assumes different meanings were intended.”).

**B. The R&R’s Conclusion that § 1225 Is Limited to “Arriving” Noncitizens Is Inconsistent with the Purpose of the IIRIRA**

The R&R’s interpretation effectively repeals a statutory fix Congress enacted with IIRIRA. Specifically, prior to the 1996 passage of IIRIRA, an “anomaly” existed “whereby immigrants who were attempting to lawfully enter the United States were in a worse position than persons who had crossed the border unlawfully.” *Torres v. Barr*, 976 F.3d 918, 928 (9th Cir. 2020). The addition of § 1225(a)(1) “ensure[d] that all immigrants who have not been lawfully admitted, regardless of their physical presence in the country, are placed on equal footing in removal proceedings under the INA—in the position of an ‘applicant for admission.’” *Id.*; *see also* H.R. Rep. No. 104-469, pt. 1, at 225 (1996) (“This subsection is intended to replace certain aspects of the current ‘entry doctrine,’ under which illegal aliens who have entered the United States without inspection gain equities and privileges in immigration proceedings that are not available to aliens who present themselves for inspection at a port of entry.”).

The R&R’s interpretive insertion of an “arriving” limitation into *all* of § 1225 undoes that fix and incentivizes noncompliance with immigration laws by providing more protection to those that bypass border inspections and evade detection to reside within the United States—a result at odds with the intent of Congress when amending § 1225 of the INA. *See Chavez v. Noem*, Case No. 3:25-cv-02325-CAB, 2025 WL 2730228, at \*4 (S.D. Cal. Sept. 24, 2025) (rejecting Petitioner’s reading because it would repeal the IIRIRA statutory fix); *Sandoval*, 2025 WL 3048926, at \*6 n.7 (“For this Court to conclude that an alien who has unlawfully entered the United States and managed to remain in the country

for a sufficient period of time is entitled to a bond hearing, while those who seek lawful entry and submit themselves for inspection are not, not only conflicts with the unambiguous language of the governing statutes, but would also seemingly undermine the intent of Congress in enacting the IIRIRA.”); *Oliveira v. Patterson*, No. 6:25-cv-01463, 2025 WL 3095972, at \*6 (W.D. La. Nov. 4, 2025) (holding that application of § 1225(b)(2)(A) to those residing in the “country comports with the legislative history of [IIRIRA]”).

**C. Prior Regulatory Commentary Is Consistent with Respondents’ Reading**

The R&R points to contemporaneous *commentary* explaining the implementing regulations for IIRIRA (but notably, not the regulations themselves) to suggest that the Executive understood § 1225 to only apply to arriving aliens in 1996. Specifically, it quotes from Inspection and Expedited Removal of Aliens; Detention and Removal of Aliens; Conduct of Removal Proceedings, Asylum Procedures, 62 Fed. Reg. 10312, 10323 (Mar. 6, 1997) which states: “Despite being applicants for admission, aliens who are present without having been admitted or paroled (formerly referred to as aliens who entered without inspection) will be eligible for bond and bond redetermination.” R&R at 22-23.

But the R&R fails to grapple with the opening phrase, “*Despite being applicants for admission.*” That is critical context. The commentary acknowledges that those in the country without having been admitted *are* “applicants for admission” under § 1225, but announces the *discretionary* choice to use § 1226 for detentions and thus permit bond hearings. A new administration has deviated from that discretionary choice, as it is

permitted to do. Thus, the R&R (and the decisions it cites) erroneously conflate prior enforcement discretion with statutory interpretation.<sup>4</sup>

### III. The Laken Riley Act Does Not Render § 1225(b)(2)(A) Superfluous

The R&R asserts that a recent amendment to the INA—the Laken Riley Act (“LRA”)—would be superfluous if the government’s reading of § 1225(b)(2)(A) is accepted. R&R at 20. But that confuses a Venn diagram of overlapping enforcement schemes that facilitate prosecutorial discretion with perfectly congruent (and therefore superfluous) enforcement provisions that do not exist. *Melgar v. Bondi*, 8:25CV555, 2025 WL 3496721, at \*12 (D. Neb. Dec. 5, 2025) (“Thus, the Court concludes that the two statutes ‘overlap’ as to aliens they cover, like a Venn Diagram.”). Instead, in both 1996 and 2025, Congress wanted *more* enforcement of immigration restrictions and enacted complementary provisions to effectuate that purpose.<sup>5</sup>

Section 1226(a)’s general detention authority, which permits the issuance of

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<sup>4</sup> The R&R also block quotes from a case explaining that the amendment to § 1226(a) merely restated the detention authority previously found in its predecessor provision. R&R at 19. From that quotation, the R&R suggests that the restatement of arrest authority in § 1226 somehow means that the amendment to § 1225 did not “fully disrupt the old system, including the system of detention and release on bond.” *Id.* But to state the obvious, that block quote is about § 1226—not the amendment to § 1225 intended to put arriving and residing noncitizens on equal footing. The two provisions can and should be read together.

<sup>5</sup> *See Cabanas*, 2025 WL 3171331 \*6 (“[T]he Laken Riley Act did have such effect, given that it required mandatory detention for criminal, inadmissible aliens who had not been subject to it—under either § 1225 or § 1226—by longstanding practice of prior Administrations. But this means only that Congress determined to narrow aspects of the discretion available to any Administration prioritizing removal proceedings toward § 1226. It doesn’t follow that the Laken Riley Act undercuts the more fulsome, executive authority that Congress provided to exist independently under the text of § 1225(b)(2)(A)”).

warrants to detain all noncitizens for their removal proceedings, must be read alongside § 1225, which specifically addresses the detention of applicants for admission which is a subset of noncitizens subject to § 1226. And § 1226 does not displace the more specific provisions in § 1225 governing the detention of applicants for admission. It is well established that where “there is no clear intention otherwise, a specific statute will not be controlled or nullified by a general one.” *Guidry v. Sheet Metal Workers Nat. Pension Fund*, 493 U.S. 365, 375 (1990) (citation omitted). Here, § 1225 is narrower in scope than § 1226. It applies only to “applicants for admission,” which includes noncitizens present in the United States who have not been admitted. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1).

To be sure, as amended by the LRA, § 1226(c)(1)(E) mandates detention for a group of noncitizens that includes a narrow subset of applicants for admission that may also be subject to § 1225(b)(2)(A) detention; namely, those who both entered without inspection and were arrested for, committed, or have admitted to committing one of a list of enumerated crimes. But § 1226(c)(1)(E) applies to *all* noncitizens who meet the criminal criteria and is thus broader. Conversely, the mandatory detention provisions of § 1226(c)(1)(E) do not reach the rest of applicants for admission under § 1225(b)(2)(A) who do *not* meet the criminal criteria. Put simply, the two enforcement provisions have overlap much like a Venn diagram, but they are not perfectly overlapping so as to make a provision superfluous. *See Am. Car Rental Ass’n v. Humphreys*, 2025 WL 1758898, at \*5 (D. Colo. May 29, 2025) (“There is, to be sure, significant overlap between the two. But the canon against superfluity only requires what its name implies; it does not require that each provision have entirely distinct coverage—just that total superfluity be avoided.”).

As the Supreme Court has acknowledged, some overlap and redundancies “are common in statutory drafting—sometimes in a congressional effort to be doubly sure, sometimes because of congressional inadvertence or lack of foresight, or sometimes simply because of the shortcomings of human communication.” *Barton v. Barr*, 590 U.S. 222, 239 (2020). “Redundancy in one portion of a statute is not a license to rewrite or eviscerate another portion of the statute contrary to its text.” *Id.*; *Rimini St., Inc. v. Oracle USA, Inc.*, 586 U.S. 334, 346 (2019) (“Sometimes the better overall reading of the statute contains some redundancy.”). Section 1225(b)(2)(A) allows detention upon encountering an immigration agent and § 1226(c) provides for detention by the issuance of a warrant. Two *different* routes to detention, in addition to two different (albeit with some overlap) groups of noncitizens affected.

Moreover, if Petitioner’s construction is correct, then one would expect to find a cross-reference to § 1225(a)(1) in § 1226(c)(1)(E)(i) or simply a reference to all “applicants for admission.” That would be the direct manner accomplishing what the R&R suggests. But the LRA has no such cross reference, demonstrating that the LRA amendment is not limited to “applicants for admission.”

Petitioner’s assertion is also contradicted by the statute. The plain language of the LRA applies to *all* noncitizens who meet its criminal criteria, not just “applicants for admission.” For example, § 1226(c)(1)(E)(i) applies to noncitizens inadmissible under “paragraph ... (6)(C) ... of section 1182(a).” In turn, the referenced paragraph (6)(C) of § 1182(a) addresses misrepresentation of material facts and applies *even if a noncitizen obtained admission* (meaning, not an “applicant for admission”) by fraud or

misrepresentation. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(C) (“Any alien who, by fraud or willfully misrepresenting a material fact, seeks to procure (or has sought to procure or has procured) a visa, other documentation, or admission into the United States or other benefit provided under this chapter is inadmissible.”). Put simply, even as amended by the LRA, § 1226 applies to *all* noncitizens and sweeps much broader. It is plainly not limited to applicants for admission. *Sandoval*, 2025 WL 3048926, at \*5 (“Petitioner’s argument that § 1226 would be rendered superfluous under Respondents’ interpretation of § 1225(b)(2) is unpersuasive. The statutory scheme of the INA does not render these two provisions mutually exclusive, and there are many other categories of aliens to whom § 1226(a) is applicable, but not § 1225(b)(2)”); *Hernandez Cruz v. Noem*, 8:25-cv-02566SB-MAA, 2025 WL 3482630, at \*4 (C.D. Cal. Dec. 2, 2025) (“But the fact that Congress added this provision as part of the Laken Riley Act in 2025 cannot be read to displace or supersede § 1225’s requirement that all applicants for admission, including those who unlawfully came to the United States without inspection, be detained.”); *Cabanas*, 2025 WL 3171331 \*6 (“Simply put, amendment by the recent Laken Riley Act to § 1226 isn’t superfluous. Beyond that, and regardless, the Supreme Court holds, redundancy in one portion of a statute is not a license to rewrite or eviscerate another portion of the statute contrary to its text.” (cleaned up)).

Further, even if there is some overlap in the class of noncitizens between § 1225(b)(2)(A) and the LRA, the two provisions use different means, have different obligations, and invert the order of detention and examination. Those differences independently undercut any assertion of superfluity.

Finally, the R&R suffers from a basic chronology problem. The Laken Riley Act passed on January 22, 2025, and was signed by the President on January 29, 2025. But as noted in the Petition, the more expanded use of § 1225 was not announced by ICE and DOJ until July of 2025 and *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216, 216 (BIA 2025) was decided later, in September of 2025. As such, Congress did not have the benefit of knowing the Executive’s expanded use of § 1225 when it passed the Laken Riley Act. It was legislating against the backdrop of a more restrained enforcement strategy of the prior administration. That is significant:

When Congress acts to amend a statute, we presume it intends its amendment to have real and substantial effect. Here, at the time of enactment, the Laken Riley Act *did* have such effect, given that it *required* mandatory detention for criminal, inadmissible aliens who had not been subject to it—under either § 1225 or § 1226—by longstanding practice of prior Administrations. But this means only that Congress determined to narrow aspects of the discretion available to any Administration prioritizing removal proceedings toward § 1226. It doesn’t follow that the Laken Riley Act undercuts the more fulsome, executive authority that Congress provided to exist independently under the text of § 1225(b)(2)(A). Simply put, amendment by the recent Laken Riley Act to § 1226 isn’t superfluous.

*Cabanas*, 2025 WL 3171331, at \*6 (cleaned up); *see also Valencia v. Chestnut*, 1:25-cv-01550 WBS JDP, 2025 WL 3205133, at \*4 (Nov. 17, 2025) (“This argument reverses the order of events. The Laken Riley Act was passed before the new interpretation of Section 1225 was issued. The Laken Riley Act could not therefore ‘perform the work’ of the expansive reading of Section 1225, because that work had not yet been done.”).

## CONCLUSION

In 1996, Congress deemed noncitizens already “present in the United States” to be “applicants for admission” to end the special treatment provided those that enter the

country illegally. But the R&R urges a reading of § 1225(b)(2)(A) that effectively repeals that statutory fix, such that noncitizens are only “applicants for admission” at the border when seeking to enter. That reading cannot be squared with the text, structure, or intent of IIRIRA. Instead, by virtue of being an applicant for admission, a noncitizen is seeking admission even if within the United States. And if more is necessary, Petitioner still falls within § 1225(b)(2)(A) because he is and has been seeking admission through applications for asylum and cancellation of removal and legal residency.

Accordingly, the Petition should be denied and the case dismissed.

Respectfully Submitted,

ROBERT J. TROESTER  
United States Attorney

*s/ Scott Maule*  
Scott Maule (OBA 31760)  
Assistant U.S. Attorney  
United States Attorney's Office  
Western District of Oklahoma  
210 Park Avenue, Suite 400  
Oklahoma City, OK 73102  
(405) 553-8832/8700  
scott.maule@usdoj.gov