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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

YENIFER ANDREA ESQUIVEL
LEON;

Petitioner,

v.

ANGELA HOOVER in her official capacity as Warden of the Clinton County Correctional Facility; DAVID O'NEILL, in his official capacity as the Acting Philadelphia Field Office Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations; TODD LYONS, in his official capacity as the Acting Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; KRISTI NOEM, in her official capacity as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, and PAMELA BONDI, in her official capacity as United States Attorney General,

Respondents.

Case No.

**VERIFIED PETITION
FOR WRIT OF
HABEAS
CORPUS**

**PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS
PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 2241**

Petitioner respectfully petitions this Honorable Court for writ of habeas corpus to remedy Petitioner's unlawful detention by Respondents, as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. Petitioner, Yenifer Andrea Esquivel Leon (hereinafter "Yenifer") is a 19-year-old noncitizen from Guatemala, who is in the custody of the United States Department of Homeland Security ("DHS"), Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), and is currently detained at Clinton County Correctional Facility ("Clinton").
2. Yenifer entered the United States for the first and only time on April 24, 2022 when she was fifteen years old. *See* Ex. A, Notice to Appear dated Apr. 24, 2022.¹
3. Yenifer presented herself to immigration authorities at the border and was detained for about two weeks at Pecos Children's Center, a children's detention camp located in Pecos Texas. *See* Ex. B, ORR Verification of Release dated May 10, 2022. On May 10, 2022, she was released into the custody of her father. *See id.*

¹ All exhibits cited herein refer to the exhibits listed in the Declaration of Matthew Archangeault filed in support of this petition.

4. Yenifer filed a Petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status in May 2024 and it was approved by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”) on August 30, 2024. *See* Ex. C, I-360 Approval Notice. In that approval notice, USCIS stated that a visa was not yet available for Yenifer to adjust her status to that of a Lawful Permanent Resident, but determined she warranted a favorable exercise of discretion to receive deferred action. *See id.* Yenifer currently has deferred action. *See* Ex. D, Employment Authorization Document with expiration date Aug. 29, 2028.
5. On November 12, 2025, Yenifer was arrested by the Philadelphia Police Department. *See* Ex. F, Court Summary. On December 11, 2025, the charges against Yenifer were withdrawn by the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office. *Id.*
6. Yenifer was detained on or about December 1, 2025 on her way home from attending the scheduled case hearing in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* Ex. E, DHS Form I-830 dated Dec. 3, 2025. She is currently detained at Clinton County Correctional Facility. *See* Ex. E; Ex. G, ICE Detainee Locator last visited Dec. 14, 2025.
7. Yenifer has been scheduled for a detained individual hearing before the Elizabeth Immigration Court on December 23, 2025. *See* Ex. I, EOIR Hearing Notice dated Dec. 8, 2025.

8. Yenifer is detained pending his removal proceedings without access to a hearing conducted by a neutral decisionmaker—a federal judge or an immigration judge—to determine whether his detention is warranted based on a danger or flight risk, pursuant to the BIA’s recent decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216 (BIA 2025).
9. This decision, which holds that 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) makes noncitizens like Petitioner who are apprehended in the United States but have never been admitted subject to mandatory detention without a bond hearing, violates the statute. Instead, 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) applies and authorizes release on bond after a hearing before an immigration judge. The BIA’s interpretation conflicts with the plain language and structure of the statute, as well as decades of uncontroverted agency practice. Therefore, the application of § 1225(b)(2) to Petitioner is contrary to law and violates the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and the Administrative Procedure Act (APA).
10. In the alternative, if the statute does authorize Yenifer’s detention without a bond hearing, it violates his rights to substantive and procedural due process. Detention of all noncitizens who are subject to inadmissibility grounds, like Petitioner, without any individualized hearing does not “bear a reasonable relation to the purpose for which the individual was committed.” *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 690 (2001). Moreover, the application of *Mathews v.*

Eldridge balancing test shows that a bond hearing is necessary to protect Riaz from an unnecessary deprivation of liberty. *See* 424 U.S. 319, 335 (1976).

11. Yenifer therefore respectfully requests that this Court issue a writ of habeas corpus and order his release from custody, with appropriate conditions of supervision if necessary. In the alternative, Petitioner requests that this Court conduct or order an immigration judge to conduct a bond hearing at which (1) the government bears the burden of proving flight risk and/or dangerousness by clear and convincing evidence and (2) the reviewing court considers alternatives to detention that could mitigate risk of flight. *See German Santos v. Warden Pike Cty. Corr. Facility*, 965 F.3d 203, 213-214 (3d Cir. 2020).

PARTIES

12. Petitioner Yenifer Andrea Esquivel Leon is a 19-year-old noncitizen from Guatemala currently detained by Respondents pending removal proceedings.
13. Respondent Angela Hoover is named in her official capacity as Warden of the Clinton County Correctional Facility. In her capacity as Warden, she oversees the administration and management of Clinton. Accordingly, she is the immediate custodian of Petitioner. Respondent Hoover is sued in her official capacity. The Clinton County Correctional Facility is located at 58 Pine Mountain Road, McElhattan, Pennsylvania 17748.

14. Respondent David O'Neill is named in his official capacity as the acting Field Office Director for Philadelphia ICE ERO. In this capacity, Respondent O'Neill is responsible for administration and management of ICE Enforcement Removal Operations in Pennsylvania and exercises control over Petitioner's custody at Pike. Respondent O'Neill's office is located at 114 North 8th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107.
15. Respondent Todd Lyons is named in his official capacity as the Acting Director of ICE. In this capacity, Respondent Lyons is responsible for the administration of federal immigration law and the execution of detention and removal determinations, and, as such, he is a legal custodian of Petitioner. Respondent Lyons's office is located at 500 12th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C., 20536.
16. Respondent Kristi Noem is the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS oversees ICE, which is responsible for administering and enforcing the immigration laws. She is the ultimate legal custodian of Petitioner. She is sued in her official capacity. Respondent Noem's office is located at U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, D.C., 20528.
17. Respondent Pamela Bondi is named in her official capacity as the Attorney General of the United States. In this capacity, she is responsible for the administration of the immigration laws as exercised by the Executive Office for Immigration Review, pursuant to INA § 103(g), 8 U.S.C. § 1103(g), routinely transacts business in the Middle District of Pennsylvania, is legally responsible

for administering Petitioner's removal proceedings and the standards used in those proceedings, and as such is the legal custodian of Petitioner. Respondent Bondi's address is U.S. Department of Justice, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, District of Columbia 20530.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

18. This action arises under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.
19. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241, Art. I § 9, cl. 2 of the United States Constitution, 28 U.S.C. § 1331, and 28 U.S.C. § 1361. This Court may grant relief under the habeas corpus statutes, 28 U.S.C. § 2241 *et seq.*, the Declaratory Judgment Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2201 *et seq.*, and the All Writs Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1651.
20. The United States has waived sovereign immunity for this action for declaratory and injunctive relief against one of its agencies and that agency's officers are sued in their official capacities. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 702.
21. Venue is proper in this District because the Petitioner is detained in this district. 28 U.S.C. § 1391; *Rumsfeld v. Padilla*, 542 U.S. 426, 442 (2004).

EXHAUSTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

22. There is no statutory requirement for exhaustion of administrative remedies where a noncitizen challenges the lawfulness of his detention. *Arango Marquez*

v. I.N.S., 346 F.3d 892, 897 (9th Cir. 2003). In cases, like Petitioner's, which "hinge[] almost totally on statutory construction, the Court finds that exhaustion of administrative remedies is likely excused on that ground." *Del Cid Del Cid v. Bondi*, 2025 WL 2985150 (W.D. Pa. Oct. 23, 2025), at 23 (noting also that in the case of a similarly-situated petitioner, requiring exhaustion by means of BIA appeal prior to litigating a claim before this Court, would be futile). Any requirement of administrative exhaustion is therefore purely discretionary. *See Santos v. Lowe*, No. 1:18-cv-1553, 2020 WL 4530728, at *2 (M.D. Pa. Aug. 2020) ("[T]he exhaustion requirement imposed by courts relating to habeas corpus petitions filed by immigration detainees is a prudential benchmark which is not compelled by statute.").

23. In making that decision, the Court should consider the urgency of the need for immediate review. "Where a person is detained by executive order . . . the need for collateral review is most pressing. . . . In this context the need for habeas corpus is more urgent." *Boumediene v. Bush*, 553 U.S. 723, 783 (2008) (waiving administrative exhaustion for executive detainees).

24. Moreover, the exhaustion "doctrine is not without exception." *Ashley v. Ridge*, 288 F. Supp. 2d 662, 666 (D.N.J. 2003). "Courts have found that the exhaustion of administrative remedies may not be required when available remedies provide no opportunity for adequate relief, an administrative appeal would be

futile, or if plaintiff has raised a substantial constitutional question.” *Id.* at 666-67.

25. The Board of Immigration Appeals has issued a published decision holding that people like Yenifer who entered the United States without inspection and therefore have not been admitted are ineligible for bond pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). Immigration judges and the BIA are bound by this decision. 8 C.F.R. § 1003.1(g)(1). Exhaustion before the BIA would therefore be futile.
26. Further, the neither the Immigration Judge nor the BIA have jurisdiction to adjudicate constitutional issues. *Qatanani v. Att’y Gen. of the U.S.*, 144 F.4th 485, 500 (3d Cir. 2025); *see also Ashley*, 288 F. Supp. 2d at 667 (citation omitted). Therefore, any administrative proceedings would be futile because Yenifer raises a constitutional due process claim. *Qatanani*, 144 F.4th at 500.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

27. Petitioner Yenifer Andrea Esquivel Leon is a 19-year-old noncitizen from Guatemala, who is in the custody of the DHS ICE, and is currently detained at Clinton County Correctional Facility. *See Exs. D, G.*
28. Yenifer entered the United States for the first and only time on April 24, 2022 when she was fifteen years old. *See Ex. A.*

29. In May of 2024, Yenifer affirmatively filed a Petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile status with USCIS. *See* Ex. C. USCIS approved her petition on August 30, 2024. *See id.*
30. Yenifer was detained on or about December 1, 2025 after appearing for her scheduled court hearing at the Philadelphia Municipal Court in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* Ex. E. She was detained at Clinton County Correctional Facility in McElhattan, Pennsylvania and remains there to date. *See* Exs. E, G
31. Respondents initiated removal proceedings against Yenifer, and issued a Notice to Appear on December 1, 2025. *See* Ex. H, Notice to Appear dated December 1, 2025. The Notice to Appear was docketed by the Elizabeth Immigration Court on December 4, 2025. Yenifer has been scheduled for a detained individual hearing before the Elizabeth Immigration Court on December 23, 2025. *See* Ex. I, EOIR Hearing Notice issued Dec. 8, 2025.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

I. Section 1226(a) Governs the Detention of People Like Yenifer Who are Detained in the United States and Have Not Previously Been Admitted

32. The Immigration and Nationality Act contains several provisions authorizing the detention of noncitizens. Section 1226(a) entitles most noncitizens with pending removal proceedings to a hearing before an Immigration Judge to determine whether they should be released on bond. 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a); 8 C.F.R. § 1236.1(d). Section 1226(c) creates an exception to section 1226(a)

and provides that noncitizens who are removable by virtue of certain criminal convictions must be detained without a bond hearing. Section 1225(b) provides for mandatory detention of noncitizens subject to expedited removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1) and for other recent arrivals “seeking admission” under (b)(2). Finally, section 1231 governs the detention of noncitizens with a final order of removal.

33. The detention provisions at § 1226(a) and § 1225(b)(2) were enacted as part of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-208, Div. C. §§ 302-03, 110 Stat. 3009-546, 3009-582 to 3009-583, 3009-585. Section 1226 was most recently amended earlier this year by the Laken Riley Act, Pub. L. No. 119-1, 139 Stat. 3 (2025). “Upon passing IIRIRA, Congress declared that the new Section 1226(a) ‘restates the current provisions in the predecessor statute,’” which allowed noncitizens who entered without inspection to be released on bond. *Rodriguez v. Bostock*, 779 F. Supp. 3d 1239, 1260 (W.D. Wash. 2025) (citing H.R. Rep. No. 104-469, pt. 1, at 229; H.R. Rep. No. 104-828, at 210).

34. Following the enactment of the IIRIRA, EOIR drafted new regulations explaining that, in general, people who entered the country without inspection were not considered detained under § 1225 and that they were instead detained under § 1226(a). *See* *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) (“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.”).

35. Thus, in the decades that followed, most people who entered without inspection and were thereafter arrested and placed in standard removal proceedings were considered for release on bond and also received bond hearings before an Immigration Judge, unless their criminal history rendered them ineligible. *See Diaz Martinez v. Hyde*, No. 25-11613, 2025 WL 2084238, -- F. Supp. 3d --, at *4 (D. Mass. July 24, 2025). That practice was consistent with many more decades of prior practice, in which noncitizens who had entered the United States, even if without inspection, were entitled to a custody hearing before an Immigration Judge or other hearing officer. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a) (1994).

36. In recent months, Respondents have abruptly changed course. On July 8, 2025, ICE Director Todd M. Lyons issued an internal memorandum stating that, “in coordination with the Department of Justice (DOJ),” DHS had “revisited” its legal position and believed that § 1225, not § 1226, governs the detention of noncitizens who are present in the United States without having been admitted. *See Diaz Martinez*, 2025 WL 2084238, at *4.

37. On September 5, 2025, the BIA followed suit and issued a precedential decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216 (BIA 2025). The BIA

held that noncitizens “who are present in the United States without admission are applicants for admission as defined under section 235(b)(2)(A) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), and must be detained for the duration of their removal proceedings.” 29 I&N Dec. at 220.

38. The BIA adopted this position despite numerous recent federal court decisions rejecting DHS’s position and holding that people who are present without admission are eligible for bond under § 1226(a). *See, e.g., Perez v. Berg*, No. 8:25-cv-494, 2025 WL 2531566, 2025 WL 2531566, at *2 (D. Neb. Sept. 3, 2025); *Maldonado v. Olson*, No. 25-cv-3142, 2025 WL 2374411, --F. Supp. 3d --, at *13 (D. Minn. Aug. 15, 2025); *Lopez Benitez v. Francis*, No. 25-cv-5937, 2025 WL 2371588, -- F. Supp. 3d --, at *9 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 13, 2025); *Rosado v. Figueroa*, No. 25-2157, 2025 WL 2337099, at *7 (D. Ariz. Aug. 11, 2025); *Diaz Martinez*, 2025 WL 2084238, at *8; *Gomes v. Hyde*, No. 1:25-cv-11571, 2025 WL 1869299, at *7 (D. Mass. July 7, 2025); *Rodriguez*, 779 F. Supp. 3d at 1257.

39. As these decisions explain, the BIA’s position in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado* defies the INA. The plain text of the statute shows that § 1226(a), not § 1225(b), applies to people like Petitioner.

40. The overwhelming majority of federal district courts that have addressed this issue have interpreted the INA to find that persons similarly situated to Yenifer —noncitizens who previously entered the United States and are currently residing in the United States—are not subject to mandatory detention under

Section 1225(b)(2)(A) but rather subject to discretionary detention pursuant to Section 1226(a), and accordingly entitled to a bond hearing. *Patel v. O’Neill*, No. 3:25-cv-2186, at 10 (M.D. Pa. Dec. 8, 2025) (quoting *Demirel v. Fed. Det. Ctr. Philadelphia*, 2025 WL 3218243, at *1 (E.D. Pa. Nov. 18, 2025)). Indeed, every district court in the Third Circuit to consider this issue, and many district courts within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, has found that detainees similarly situated to Yenifer are not subject to mandatory detention under Section 1225(b)(2)(A) and that the Respondents’ interpretation of the INA is wrong. *Patel v. O’Neill*, No. 3:25-cv-2186 at 10. *See, e.g. Henriquez-Hernandez v. Rose*, 2025 WL 3284447 (M.D. Pa. Nov. 25, 2025) (Neary, J.); *del Cid v. Bondi*, 2025 WL 29885150 (W.D. Pa. Oct. 23, 2025) (Haines, J.); *C.B. v. Oddo*, 2025 WL 2977870 (W.D. Pa. Oct. 22, 2025) (Brown, MJ.); *Conde v. Jamison*, 2025 WL 3499256 (E.D. Pa. Dec. 5, 2025) (Brody, J.); *Perez Suspes v. Rose*, 2025 WL 3492820 (E.D. Pa. Dec. 5, 2025) (Brody, J.); *Velasquez v. O’Neill*, 2025 WL 3473363 (E.D. Pa. Dec. 3, 2025) (Henry, J.); *Nogueira-Mendes v. McShane*, 2025 WL 3473364 (E.D. Pa. Dec. 3, 2025) (Slomsky, J.); *MLZ v. Noem*, 2025 WL 3470046 (E.D. Pa. Dec. 2, 2025) (Baylson, J.); *Yilmaz v. Warden of the Fed. Det. Ctr. Philadelphia*, 2025 WL 3459484 (E.D. Pa. Dec. 2, 2025) (Rufe, J.).

41. Section 1226(a) applies by default to all persons “pending a decision on whether the [noncitizen] is to be removed from the United States.” *See Jennings*

v. Rodriguez, 583 U.S. 281, 288 (2018) (describing 1226(a) as the “default rule” for people detained pending removal). These removal hearings are held under § 1229a, to “decid[e] the inadmissibility or deportability of a[] [noncitizen].”

42. The text of § 1226 explicitly applies to people charged with inadmissibility, including those who entered without inspection. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c)(1)(E). Just this year, Congress enacted subparagraph (E) in the Laken Riley Act to exclude certain noncitizens who entered without inspection from § 1226(a)’s default bond provision. Subparagraph (E)’s reference to persons inadmissible under § 1182(6)(A), i.e., persons inadmissible for entering without inspection, makes clear that, by default, such people are afforded a bond hearing under subsection (a). As the *Rodriguez Vazquez* court explained, “[w]hen Congress creates “specific exceptions” to a statute’s applicability, it “proves” that absent those exceptions, the statute generally applies. *Rodriguez Vazquez*, 2025 WL 1193850, at *12 (citing *Shady Grove Orthopedic Assocs., P.A. v. Allstate Ins. Co.*, 559 U.S. 393, 400 (2010)).

43. Under the BIA’s interpretation, all noncitizens subject to inadmissibility grounds are detained without the opportunity for a bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b). *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. at 220; *see* 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6) (making people who are present without having been admitted inadmissible); 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(14) (defining an admission). Therefore, this interpretation would render all the grounds of mandatory

detention in § 1226(c) applying to inadmissible noncitizens, including the recently passed Laken Riley Act, superfluous. *Gomes*, 2025 WL 1869299, at *7; *Rodriguez*, 779 F. Supp. 3d at 1258; see *Marx v. Gen. Revenue Corp.*, 568 U.S. 371, 386 (2103) (“[T]he canon against surplusage is strongest when an interpretation would render superfluous another part of the same statutory scheme.”). This statutory structure demonstrates that Congress did not intend to make § 1226(a) inapplicable to all inadmissible noncitizens, but rather viewed it as the default bond provision for people arrested within the United States.

44. By contrast, § 1225(b) applies to people arriving at U.S. ports of entry or who very recently entered the United States. The statute’s entire framework is premised on inspections at the border of people who are “seeking admission” to the United States. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A); see also *Diaz Martinez*, 2025 WL 2084238, at *8 (“[O]ur immigration laws have long made a distinction between those [noncitizens] who have come to our shores seeking admission . . . and those who are within the United States after an entry, irrespective of its legality.” (quoting *Leng May Ma v. Barber*, 357 U.S. 185, 187 (1958))). Indeed, the Supreme Court has explained that this mandatory detention scheme applies “at the Nation’s borders and ports of entry, where the Government must determine whether a[] [noncitizen] seeking to enter the country is admissible.” *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 287.

45. The BIA’s interpretation “would render the phrase ‘seeking admission’ in 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) mere surplusage.” *Lopez Benitez*, 2025 WL 2371588, at *6. That section applies to people who are (1) applicants for admission; (2) seeking admission; and (3) not clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to be admitted. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A); *Lopez Benitez*, 2025 WL 2371588, at *6; *Diaz Martinez*, 2025 WL 2084238, at *2. The BIA’s interpretation subjects all applicants for admission to mandatory detention, rendering the “seeking admission” criterion unnecessary and violating the rule against surplusage. *Lopez Benitez*, 2025 WL 2371588, at *6; *Diaz Martinez*, 2025 WL 2084238, at *6. *See also Bethancourt Soto v. Soto*, No. 1:25-cv-16200 at 12 (D.N.J. Oct. 22, 2025), *Vargas Ramos v. Rokosky et al.*, No 2:25-cv-15982 (D.N.J. Nov. 3, 2025).
46. Instead, the phrase “seeking admission” indicates that § 1225(b)(2)(A) applies to people who are taking “some sort of present-tense action,” in other words, coming or attempting to come into the United States. *Diaz Martinez*, 2025 WL 2084238, at *6; *see also Matter of M-C-D-V-*, 28 I&N Dec. 18, 23 (BIA 2020) (stating that “the use of the present progressive tense . . . denotes an ongoing process”). Therefore, § 1226(a), not § 1225(b)(2)(A), governs the detention of people detained within the United States who are not actively seeking admission, as required by the statute.
47. Applying § 1226(a), rather than § 1225(b), to people detained in the interior who had previously entered without inspection is consistent with the

government's longstanding practice, which "can inform a court's determination of what the law is." *Loper Bright Enter. v. Raimondo*, 603 U.S. 369, 386 (2024). This longstanding practice further counsels against the BIA's abrupt policy change. *Maldonado*, 2025 WL 2374411, at *11.

48. Finally, as discussed below, the BIA's interpretation of § 1225(b)(2)(A) to mandate detention without a bond hearing for all noncitizens present in the United States without having been admitted presents serious constitutional concerns. Therefore, to the degree that the statute remains ambiguous, the Court should presume that Congress "did not intend the alternative which raises serious constitutional doubts" and reject that construction. *Clark v. Martinez*, 543 U.S. 371, 381-82 (2005). Therefore, § 1226(a), which permits bond hearings, not § 1226(b)(2)(A), which does not, governs the detention of people like Yenifer.

II. The BIA's Application of Mandatory Detention to Noncitizens Like Yenifer Violates Substantive and Procedural Due Process

47. "It is well established that the Fifth Amendment entitles [noncitizens] to due process of law in deportation proceedings." *Demore v. Kim*, 538 U.S. 510, 523 (2003) (quoting *Reno v. Flores*, 507 U.S. 292, 306 (1993)). "Freedom from imprisonment—from government custody, detention, or other forms of physical restraint—lies at the heart of the liberty" that the Due Process Clause protects. *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 690 (2001); see also *id* at 718 (Kennedy, J.,

dissenting) (“Liberty under the Due Process Clause includes protection against unlawful or arbitrary personal restraint or detention.”). This fundamental due process protection applies to all noncitizens within the United States, including both removable and inadmissible noncitizens. *See id.* at 693; *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202, 212 (1982); *Wong Wing v. United States*, 163 U.S. 228, 238 (1896).

48. Absent adequate procedural protections, substantive due process requires a “special justification” that “outweighs the individual’s constitutionally protected interest in avoiding physical restraint.” *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 690; *accord, e.g., Torralba v. Knight*, No. 2:25-cv-1366, 2025 WL 2581792, at *12 (D. Nev. Sept. 5, 2025) (describing the standard for a substantive due process violation); *Fernandez v. Lyons*, No. 8:25-cv-506, 2025 WL 2531539, at *4 (D. Neb. Sept. 3, 2025) (same). In the immigration context, the Supreme Court has recognized only two valid purposes for civil detention—to mitigate the risks of danger to the community and to prevent flight. *Id.*; *Demore*, 538 U.S. at 528. Thus, to withstand constitutional scrutiny, the nature and duration of mandatory immigration detention must be reasonably related to these purposes.

49. In *Demore*, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of § 1226(c) against a facial challenge, specifically citing evidence that had been before Congress about noncitizens with criminal convictions. 538 U.S. at 518-520. This justification does not apply, however, to noncitizens with no criminal record whatsoever who have lived in the community for years. The broad policy

outlined in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado* is not reasonably related to the purposes of preventing danger to the community or flight risk and violates substantive due process.

50. Additionally, procedural due process protects noncitizens against deprivation of liberty without adequate procedural protections, including notice and the opportunity to be heard. *A.A.R.P. v. Trump*, 145 S. Ct. 1364, 1367 (2025); *Trump v. J.G.G.*, 145 S. Ct. 1003, 1006 (2025); *Velasco Lopez v. Decker*, 978 F.3d 842, 851 (2d Cir. 2020). In determining the proper procedure to protect a detained noncitizen’s procedural due process rights under the Fifth Amendment, courts apply the three-part balancing test in *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 335 (1976), weighing (1) “the private interest that will be affected by the official action;” (2) “the risk of an erroneous deprivation of such interest through the procedures used, and the probable value, if any, of additional or substitute procedural safeguards;” and (3) “the Government’s interest, including the function involved and the fiscal and administrative burdens that the additional or substitute procedural requirement would entail.” *Black v. Decker*, 103 F.4th 133, 147-48 (2d Cir. 2024); *Gayle v. Warden Monmouth C’ty Corr. Facility*, 12 F. 4th 321, 331 (3d Cir. 2021); *Hernandez-Lara*, 10 F.4th at 28; *Velasco Lopez*, 978 F.3d at 851 (all quoting *Mathews*, 424 U.S. at 335). Here, the BIA’s interpretation of the statute to require detention of all people in the United States without having been admitted deprives them of their liberty without any

individualized process to determine whether such detention is necessary to prevent flight risk or danger to the community, and violates due process.

51. First, the “importance and fundamental nature” of an individual’s liberty interest is well-established. *United States v. Salerno*, 481 U.S. 739, 750 (1987); *see also Ashley*, 288 F. Supp. at 670 (“[F]reedom from confinement is a liberty interest of the highest constitutional import.”). For people “who can face years of detention before resolution of their immigration proceedings, ‘the individual interest at stake is without doubt particularly important.’” *Linares Martinez v. Decker*, No. 18-cv-6527 (JMF), 2018 WL 5023946 at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 17, 2018).

52. Weighing this factor in *Velasco Lopez*, the Second Circuit found the private interest to be “on any calculus, substantial,” observing that the petitioner, “could not maintain employment or see his family or friends or others outside normal visiting hours. The use of a cell phone was prohibited, and he had no access to the internet or email and limited access to the telephone.” 978 F.3d at 851-52. Similarly, the First Circuit found a substantial private liberty interest for the petitioner in *Hernandez-Lara*, noting that the petitioner there was incarcerated “alongside criminal inmates” at a jail where “she was separated from her fiancé and unable to maintain her employment.” 10 F.4th at 28.

53. Second, absent any individualized bond hearing, people will be detained even if they pose no danger to the community or flight risk, because there is no

mechanism to determine whether their detention is necessary. *See, e.g.,* *Günaydin v. Trump*, No. 25-cv-1151, 2025 WL 1459154, -- F. Supp. 3d --, at *8 (D. Minn. May 21, 2025) (noting that lack of consideration of “individualized or particularized facts . . . increases the potential for erroneous deprivation of individuals’ private rights”); *Ashley*, 28 F. Supp. 2d at 670 (finding a procedural due process violation because “the Government has not proved that Petitioner presents an identified and articulable threat to an individual or the community so as to justify his continued detention”). A bond hearing would have significant value because it is designed to assess the individualized facts of each case and determine whether less restrictive measures can fulfill the same goals.

54. Finally, the burden on the government of returning to the longstanding practice of holding bond hearings for people like Petitioner does not outweigh the liberty interest at stake. To the contrary, the government has an interest in “minimizing the enormous impact of incarceration in cases where it serves no purpose.” *Velasco Lopez*, 978 F.3d at 854; *see also Hernandez-Lara*, 10 F.4th at 33 (noting that “limiting the use of detention to only those noncitizens who are dangerous or a flight risk may save the government, and therefore the public, from expending substantial resources on needless detention”). Additionally, “unnecessary detention imposes substantial societal costs. . . . The needless detention of those individuals thus separates families and removes from the community breadwinners, caregivers, parents, siblings, and employees. Those

ruptures in the fabric of communal life impact society in intangible ways that are difficult to calculate in dollars and cents.” *Hernandez-Lara*, 10 F.4th at 33 (citation and internal quotation marks omitted). The cost to the government and society of detaining people unnecessarily for long periods is greater than the cost of providing individualized hearings, and it weighs in favor of additional procedural protections.

55. At these bond hearings, due process requires that the Government bear the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence. *See Gayle*, 12 F.4th at 332 (“[W]hen such a severe deprivation is at issue, the Government must bear the burden of proof.”). “A standard of proof serves to allocate the risk of error between the litigants and reflects the relative importance attached to the ultimate decision.” *German Santos v. Warden Pike C’ty Corr. Facility*, 965 F.3d 203, 213 (citing *Addington v. Texas*, 441 U.S. 418, 423 (1979)). Therefore, when the Third Circuit has ordered a constitutionally required bond hearing, it places the burden on the government by clear and convincing evidence. *German Santos*, 965 F.3d at 214; *Guerrero-Sanchez v. Warden York C’ty Prison*, 905 F.3d 208, 224 & n.12 (3d Cir. 2018), *abrogated on other grounds by Johnson v. Arteaga-Martinez*, 596 U.S. 572 (2022). Other circuit courts have similarly held that due process requires this allocation of the burden in bond hearings for noncitizens like petitioner, who were then detained under § 1226(a). *Hernandez-Lara*, 10 F.4th at 39-40; *Velasco Lopez*, 978 F.3d at 855-56. Thus, even if the statute

requires detention without a bond hearing, due process requires a hearing at which the government bears the burden by clear and convincing evidence.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF
Violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a)
Unlawful Denial of Release on Bond

56. Petitioner re-alleges and incorporates by reference the above paragraphs.

57. The mandatory detention provision at 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) does not apply to all noncitizens residing in the United States who are subject to grounds of inadmissibility. Specifically, it does not apply to Yenifer, as she is not applying for admission. Respondents' unlawful application of § 1225(b) to Petitioner violates the INA.

SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF
Violation of Bond Regulations, 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1, 1236.1, and 1003.19
Unlawful Denial of Release on Bond

58. Petitioner re-alleges and incorporates by reference the above paragraphs.

59. In 1997, after Congress amended the INA through IIRAIRA, EOIR and the then-Immigration and Naturalization Service issued an interim rule to interpret and apply IIRAIRA. Specifically, under the heading of "Apprehension, Custody, and Detention of [Noncitizens]," the agencies explained that "[d]espite being applicants for admission, [noncitizens] who are present without having been admitted or paroled (formerly referred to as [noncitizens] who entered without inspection) will be eligible for bond and bond redetermination." 62 Fed. Reg. at

10323 (emphasis added). The agencies thus made clear that individuals who had entered without inspection were eligible for consideration for bond and bond hearings before Immigration Judges under 8 U.S.C. § 1226 and its implementing regulations.

60. The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 1003.19 lays out bond procedures, and § 1003.19(h)(2) delineates categories of noncitizens who are subject to mandatory detention and not entitled to a bond hearing. The fact that noncitizens within the United States who are subject to inadmissibility grounds are not included on this list shows that the agencies did not intend them to be subject to mandatory detention. The BIA's interpretation thus violates the regulations and unlawfully denies Yenifer a bond hearing.

THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF
Violation of the Administrative Procedure Act
Contrary to Law and Arbitrary and Capricious Agency Policy

61. Petitioner re-alleges and incorporates by reference the above paragraphs.

62. The APA provides that a “reviewing court shall . . . hold unlawful and set aside agency action, findings, and conclusions found to be . . . arbitrary and capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law.”
5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A).

63. The mandatory detention provision at 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) does not apply to all noncitizens residing in the United States who are subject to grounds of

inadmissibility. Specifically, it does not apply to Yenifer, as she is not applying for admission. Yenifer is detained under § 1226(a) and is eligible for release on bond.

64. In taking a contrary position, the BIA has reversed decades of prior practice, and “would expand § 1225(b) face beyond how it has been enforced historically, potentially subjecting millions more undocumented immigrants to mandatory detention, while simultaneously narrowing § 1226(a) such that it would have extremely limited (if any) application.” *Lopez Benitez*, 2025 2371588, at *8. Respondents have failed to articulate reasoned explanations for their decisions, which represent changes in the agencies’ policies and positions; have considered factors that Congress did not intend to be considered; have entirely failed to consider important aspects of the problem; and have offered explanations for their decisions that run counter to the evidence before the agencies.

65. The application of § 1225(b)(2) to Yenifer is arbitrary, capricious, and not in accordance with law, and as such, it violates the APA. See 5 U.S.C. § 706(2).

FOURTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF
Violation of the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause
Substantive Due Process

66. Petitioner re-alleges and incorporates by reference the above paragraphs.

67. The Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment forbids the government from depriving any “person” of liberty “without due process of law.” U.S. Const.

amend. V. Substantive due process requires that immigration detention without a bond hearing be reasonably related to the goals of ensuring the appearance of noncitizens at future proceedings and preventing danger to the community.

Zadvydas, 533 U.S. at 690.

68. The BIA's application of mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2) is not reasonably related to those goals and thus violates substantive due process. Since his entry, Yenifer has complied with all the requirements imposed upon her by DHS. Yenifer is not a flight risk as she has lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with her father since entry and has the direction of legal counsel, as well as viable forms of relief from removal, including an approved Petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.

FIFTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF
Violation of the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause
Procedural Due Process

69. Petitioner re-alleges and incorporates by reference the above paragraphs.

70. The Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment forbids the government from depriving any "person" of liberty "without due process of law." U.S. Const. amend. V. Courts apply the *Mathews v. Eldridge* balancing test to determine what procedures the due process clause requires. *Gayle*, 12 F.4th at 331.

71. The first factor is the private interest affected by the official action. *Id.* Here, the deprivation of Petitioner's liberty is a particularly weighty interest. Yenifer is

being held despite being bond-eligible. All charges against Yenifer have been withdrawn by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. *See* Ex. F. She has no criminal convictions and does not pose a danger to the community. In fact, Yenifer has an approved SIJS petition and deferred action. To date, Yenifer has been detained for thirteen days without access to a custody redetermination before a neutral decisionmaker.

72. The second factor is the risk of erroneous deprivation of such interest through the procedures used, and the probable value, if any, of additional safeguards. *Id.* Here, there is a great risk of unnecessary detention because the BIA's interpretation of the statute does not permit any individualized determination of whether detention during removal proceedings is necessary. *See Ashley*, 288 F. Supp. 2d at 670. At a hearing, Yenifer could show that her detention is not necessary because he is neither a danger to society nor a flight risk. Yenifer has no criminal convictions and thus poses no danger to society. A hearing at which the government bears the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence would protect the substantial liberty interest at stake. *German Santos*, 965 F.3d at 213-14.

73. The final factor is the Government's interest. *Gayle*, 12 F.4th at 331. The government has no legitimate interest in detaining Yenifer when detention is not necessary to ensure appearance at future hearings or protect the community, and less restrictive measures like a reasonable bond would serve those purposes.

Hernandez-Lara, 10 F.4th at 32-33; *see Ousman D. v. Decker*, No. 20-9646, 2020 WL 5587441, at *4 (holding that due process requires consideration of less restrictive alternatives to detention that would address the government's legitimate purpose); *Hechavarria v. Whitaker*, 358 F. Supp. 3d 227, 241-42 (W.D.N.Y. 2019) (same). Further, Yenifer has an approved petition and awaits availability of a visa number. Therefore, the government does not have an interest in detaining Yenifer without a bond hearing that outweighs her substantial liberty interest in such an individualized determination.

74. Respondents' detention of Yenifer without any hearing to determine whether that detention is necessary violates procedural due process.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

75. WHEREFORE, Petitioner respectfully requests that this Court:

76. Assume jurisdiction over this matter;

77. Order that Petitioner remain in the State of Pennsylvania and not be transferred outside the state of Pennsylvania until further order of this Court in order to preserve Petitioner's continued access to counsel;

78. Declare that Petitioner's continued detention violates the Immigration and Nationality Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A); and/or the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution;

79. Issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus and order Petitioner's release within 10 days unless Respondents schedule a hearing before an immigration judge at which the

government must establish by clear and convincing evidence that Petitioner presents a risk of flight or danger, even after consideration of alternatives to detention that could mitigate any risk that Petitioner's release would present;

80. In the alternative, order Petitioner's immediate release from custody;

81. Award Petitioner his costs and reasonable attorney fees in this action as provided for by the Equal Access to Justice Act, as amended, 5 U.S.C. § 504 and 28 U.S.C. § 2412, and on any other basis justified under law; and grant such further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: December 14, 2025

Respectfully submitted,
/s/Matthew J. Archambeault
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**VERIFICATION BY SOMEONE ACTING ON PETITIONER’S BEHALF
PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 2242**

I am submitting this verification on behalf of the Petitioner because I am one of Petitioner’s attorneys, and I have discussed the claims with Petitioner’s legal team.

Based on those discussions, I hereby verify that the statements made in the attached Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

EXHIBIT	DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION
A	Notice to Appear dated April 24, 2022
B	ORR Verification of Release dated May 10, 2022
C	USCIS Form I-360 Approval Notice dated Aug. 30, 2024
D	Employment Authorization Document expiring Aug. 29, 2028
E	DHS Form I-830 dated Dec. 3, 2025
F	First Judicial District of Pennsylvania Court Summary
G	ICE Detainee Locator last visited Dec. 14, 2025
H	Notice to Appear dated Dec. 1, 2025
I	EOIR Master Calendar Hearing Notice dated Dec. 8, 2025

Dated: December 14, 2025

Respectfully submitted,
/s/Matthew J. Archambeault
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