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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

Yoandri Gonzales Terrero,

Petitioner,

v.

JOHN MATTOS, in his official capacity as Warden of Nevada Southern Detention Center; BRIAN HENKE in his official capacity as Field Office Director, ICE Las Vegas Office; PAMELA BONDI, in her official capacity as Attorney General of the United States; RICKISHA HIGHTOWER, in her official capacity as Assistant Chief Counsel Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, Las Vegas and KRISTI NOEM, in her official capacity as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security,

Respondents.

Case No. 2:25-cv-02628-CDS-BNW

Federal Respondents' Response to Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus, ECF No. 1, and Motion for Temporary Restraining Order, ECF No. 4

The Federal Respondents hereby submit this Response to Petitioner Yoandri Gonzales Terrero ("Petitioner" or "Gonzales Terrero") Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus, ECF No. 1, and Motion for Temporary Restraining Order, ECF No. 4.

I. Introduction

Petitioner ("Petitioner") seeks a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 challenging the legality of his immigration detention. ECF No. 1.

Federal Respondents have carefully reviewed the Petition and submit this response to address the issues identified by the Court. While Respondents do not consent to issuance of the writ and expressly reserve all rights, including the right to appeal, Federal Respondents respectfully submit that further briefing is unnecessary because the legal issues presented are controlled by this Court's recent decision in *Baca Beltrand v. Mattos*, Case No. 2:25-cv-01430-CDS-EJY, and *Jacobo Ramirez v. Noem,* Case No. 2:25-cv-02136-RFB-MDC, and the material facts are not meaningfully distinguishable.

In addition, although Petitioner's filings frame this case as turning on the asserted absence of an electronically docketed appeal and an asserted lack of "notice" through EOIR's ECAS system (*see* ECF No. 1; ECF No. 4), Respondents dispute Petitioner's legal and factual characterizations regarding the posture of the underlying administrative proceedings and the implications (if any) for detention authority. To the extent Petitioner seeks to litigate alleged defects in administrative notice or appellate processing, those claims do not provide a basis for habeas relief from detention and are not properly resolved through emergency injunctive relief or through a petition for a writ of habeas corpus in this § 2241 proceeding. Respondents respectfully submit that the issues presented can be resolved under the governing statutory framework and this Court's recent orders, without emergency injunctive relief.

II. Background and Issues Presented

Petitioner challenges ICE's statutory authority to detain him, asserting that detention is governed by 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) rather than 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). Among other things, Petitioner requests as relief that Respondents be enjoined from transferring Petitioner outside the jurisdiction of this Court while this matter is pending, that the Court order Petitioner released from immigration custody or, in the alternative, require Respondents to demonstrate a lawful basis for continued detention supported by a properly filed and served appeal, or in the alternative, provide Petitioner with an individualized bond hearing "at which the government bears the burden to prove by clear and convincing evidence that continued detention is justified based on danger to the community or risk of flight," and

grant Petitioner costs and attorney's fees pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act. ECF No 1, at 24–25; ECF No. 4, at 15.

Respondents' position is that Petitioner is subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b) because Petitioner was present in the United States without being admitted or paroled. See *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216, 228 (BIA 2025); see also *Yinxiao Chen v. Almodovar*, 25-CV-09670, 2026 WL 100761, at *6–13 (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 14, 2026); *Xiaoquan Chen v. Almodovar*, 2025 WL 3484855, at *3–8 (S.D.N.Y. Dec. 4, 2025).

III. This Court's Prior Decision Controls the Statute of Detention

Respondents acknowledge that this Court recently reached a different conclusion in, for example, *Baca Beltrand v. Mattos*, Case No. 2:25-cv-01430-CDS-EJY, ECF No. 54, and *Jacobo Ramirez v. Noem,* Case No. 2:25-cv-02136-RFB-MDC.

For example, in a decision issued on November 14, 2025, the Court concluded that the petitioner's detention was not governed by § 1225, but instead fell under § 1226. *See Baca Beltrand v. Mattos*, Case No. 2:25-cv-01430-CDS-EJY, ECF No. 54, at 6. The Court explained that it could not accept Respondents' arguments regarding the revised policy of applying 8 U.S.C. § 1225 to aliens who were apprehended inside the United States despite having entered without inspection. *Id.* The Court explained that applying 8 U.S.C. § 1225 to aliens in the circumstances of Baca Beltran and Petitioner Gonzales Terrero would render § 1226 meaningless and superfluous, and the Court thus ordered that Baca Beltrand be treated as a detained alien pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a). *Id.*

Here, the material facts relevant to the statutory-authority question are not meaningfully distinguishable from those presented in *Baca Beltrand*. Accordingly, if the Court adheres to its prior ruling, that decision would control the outcome of the statutory-authority issue in this case.

IV. Respondents' Position and Preservation of Issues

While Respondents respectfully maintain their position that detention is authorized under § 1225(b), they acknowledge that the Court's prior ruling would govern if applied

here. Respondents therefore rely upon, and incorporate by reference, the legal arguments previously presented in *Baca Beltrand v. Mattos*, and *Jacobo Ramirez v. Noem*, without re-briefing those issues, to conserve judicial and party resources and to facilitate prompt resolution of this matter. Respondents have enclosed to this Response the responses filed in those cases as Exhibits A and B.

Federal Respondents do not consent to issuance of the writ and expressly reserve all rights, including the right to appeal.

V. Under Section 1226(a), Petitioner May Challenge Detention Via a Bond Hearing At Which Petitioner Bears the Burden to Justify Release

Section 1226 "generally governs the process of arresting and detaining [aliens who have already entered the United States] pending their removal." *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 288. Section 1226(a) provides that "an alien *may* be arrested and detained pending a decision on whether the alien is to be removed from the United States." 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) (emphasis added). The Attorney General and DHS thus have broad discretionary authority to detain an alien during removal proceedings. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a)(1) (DHS "may continue to detain the arrested alien" during the pendency of removal proceedings); *Nielsen v. Preap*, 586 U.S. 392, 409 (2019) (highlighting that "subsection (a) creates authority for *anyone's* arrest or release under § 1226—and it gives the Secretary broad discretion as to both actions").

When an alien is apprehended, a DHS officer makes an initial custody determination. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 236.1(c)(8). DHS "may continue to detain the arrested alien." 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a)(1). "To secure release, the alien must show that he does not pose a danger to the community and that he is likely to appear for future proceedings." *Johnson v. Guzman Chavez*, 594 U.S. 523, 527 (2021) (citing 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1(c)(8), 1236.1(c)(8). Section 1226(a) thus places the burden on the alien to justify release and does not create any presumption in favor of release during removal proceedings. If DHS decides to release the alien, it may set a bond or place other conditions on release. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a)(2); 8 C.F.R. § 236.1(c)(8). Even after DHS decides to release an alien, it may "at any time revoke

such release, rearrest the alien under the original warrant, and detain the alien." 8 U.S.C. § 1226(b).

If DHS determines that an alien should remain detained during the pendency of his removal proceedings, the alien may request a custody redetermination hearing (*i.e.*, a "bond hearing") before an immigration judge. *See* 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1(d)(1), 1003.19, 1236.1(d). The immigration judge then conducts a bond hearing and decides whether to release the alien, based on a variety of factors that account for the alien's ties to the United States and evaluate whether the alien poses a flight risk or danger to the community. *See Matter of Guerra*, 24 I. & N. Dec. 37, 40 (BIA 2006); *see also* 8 C.F.R. § 1003.19(d) ("The determination of the Immigration Judge as to custody status or bond may be based upon any information that is available to the Immigration Judge or that is presented to him or her by the alien or [DHS]."). Where the immigration judge concludes that the alien has not met his burden, continued detention during the pendency of removal proceedings is expressly authorized by statute.

Section 1226(a) does not provide an alien with an absolute right to release on bond. *See Matter of D-J-*, 23 I. & N. Dec. at 575 (citing *Carlson v. Landon*, 342 U.S. 524, 534 (1952)). Nor does the Constitution. *Velasco Lopez*, 978 F.3d at 848. Furthermore, Section 1226(a) grants DHS and the Attorney General broad discretionary authority to determine whether to detain or release an alien during his removal proceedings. *See id.* In the exercise of this broad discretion, and consistent with DHS regulations, the BIA—whose decisions are binding on immigration judges—has placed the burden of proof on the alien, who "must establish to the satisfaction of the Immigration Judge . . . that he or she does not present a danger to persons or property, is not a threat to the national security, and does not pose a risk of flight." *Matter of Guerra*, 24 I. & N. Dec. at 38. The BIA's "to the satisfaction" standard is equivalent to a preponderance of the evidence standard. *See Matter of Barreiros,* 10 I. & N. Dec. 536, 537 (BIA 1964). If, after the bond hearing, the immigration judge concludes that the alien should not be released, or the immigration judge has set a bond

amount that the alien believes is too high, the alien may appeal that decision to the BIA. *See* 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1(d)(3), 1003.19(f), 1003.38, 1236.1(d)(3).

Here, to the extent the Court determines that at 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) governs Petitioner's detention, Respondents respectfully submit that the framework described above would control Petitioner's detention. Therefore, Petitioner's continued detention is lawful unless an IJ conducts a bond hearing, and Petitioner "show[s] that he does not pose a danger to the community and that he is likely to appear for future proceedings." *Guzman Chavez*, 594 U.S. at 527 (citing 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1(c)(8), 1236.1(c)(8)). To the extent Petitioner suggests that the United States "bears the burden to prove by clear and convincing evidence that continued detention is justified based on danger to the community or risk of flight" (*see* ECF No. 1, at 24–25), the Petition simply misses the mark.

To the extent Petitioner contends that continued detention is unlawful absent proof of a properly filed or served administrative appeal, that contention fails as a matter of law. Petitioner cites no authority holding that DHS's detention authority under the INA turns on compliance with internal appellate filing or service mechanics, nor does habeas relief lie to police such procedural technicalities. As Respondents have explained, and as this Court has recognized, where detention is governed by 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), the mechanism for seeking release is a custody redetermination (bond) hearing before an immigration judge, at which the alien bears the burden of establishing that release is warranted. Alleged defects in administrative notice or appellate processing do not transform that statutory framework or supply a basis for habeas relief.

VI. Request for EAJA Fees Should be Denies

Petitioner seeks attorney's fees and costs pursuant to § 2412 of the Equal Access for Justice Act ("EAJA"), which allows fee-shifting in civil actions by or against the United States. EAJA has two parts, agency adversarial adjudication fee-shifting, 5 U.S.C. § 504, and fee-shifting in civil actions in federal court, 28 U.S.C. § 2412. Petitioner cannot obtain fees in this case under 5 U.S.C. § 504 since that provision excludes administrative

immigration proceedings. *Ardestani v. Immigration and Naturalization Service,* 502 U.S. 129 (1991). Petitioner's only recourse for fees is pursuant to § 2412(d)(1)(A), which provides, subject to exceptions not relevant here, that in an action brought by or against the United States, a court must award fees and expenses to a prevailing non-government party "unless the court finds that the position of the United States was substantially justified or that special circumstances make an award unjust." 28 U.S.C. § 2412(d)(1)(A).

Here, Petitioner's request is premature because he is not a prevailing party. Second, even if Petitioner were to prevail in this case, the Federal Respondents' position asserted in this Response, as well as those presented in the responses attached herein as Exhibits A and B, is substantially justified because other courts have found the arguments presented by Respondents to be persuasive and that DHS can lawfully detain, under the mandatory detention provisions of 8 U.S.C. § 1225, other petitioners who are similarly situated as Petitioner.

A growing number of well-reasoned precedent supports the Federal Respondents' position in this case. The following decisions have found that, when the law is properly interpreted and applied, the law supports the Federal Respondents' positions: *Chavez v. Noem*, No. 25-02325, 2025 WL 2730228 (S.D. Cal. Sept. 24, 2025); *Vargas Lopez v. Trump*, No. 25-526, 2025 WL 2780351 (D. Neb. Sept. 30, 2025); *Cirrus Rojas v. Olson*, No. 25-cv-1437, 2025 WL 3033967, at *1 (E.D. Wis. Oct. 30, 2025); *Barrios Sandoval v. Acuna*, No. 25-01467, 2025 WL 3048926 (W.D. La. Oct. 31, 2025); *Silva Oliveira v. Patterson*, No. 25-01463, 2025 WL 3095972 (W.D. La. Nov. 4, 2025); *Mejia Olalde v. Noem*, No. 25-00168, 2025 WL 3131942 (E.D. Mo. Nov. 10, 2025); *Garibay-Robledo v. Noem*, 1:25-cv-00177 (N.D. Tex. 2025); *Montoya Cabanas v. Bondi*, 4:25-cv-04830, 2025 WL 3171331 (S.D. Tex. Nov. 13, 2025); *Altamiro Ramos v. Lyons*, 2:25-cv-09785, 2025 WL 3199872 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 12, 2025); *Cortes Alonzo v. Noem*, No. 1:25-cv-01519, 2025 WL 3208284, at *1 (E.D. Cal. Nov. 17, 2025).

For example, the United States District Court for the District of Nebraska and the United States District Court for the Southern District of California have both issued

decisions holding that, under the plain language of § 1225(a)(1), aliens present in the United States who have not been admitted are "applicants for admission" and are thus subject to the mandatory detention provisions of "applicants for admission" under § 1225(b)(2). *See Vargas Lopez*, 2025 WL 2780351; *Chavez*, 2025 WL 2730228. Because other federal judges have found persuasive the positions advanced by the Federal Respondents in this case, the Federal Respondents' position is substantially justified. *See Medina Tovar v. Zuchowski*, 41 F.4th 1085, 1091 (9th Cir. 2022) (finding that the district court did not abuse its discretion, in finding that the United States' position was substantially justified for purposes of EAJA, where different judges disagreed about the proper reading of the statute and the case involved an issue of first impression).

Because the Federal Respondents' positions in this case are substantially justified, Petitioner's request for attorney's fees under EAJA cannot prevail.

VII. DHS Has Plenary Power to Transfer Detainees and This Court's Jurisdiction Is Secure Regardless of a Subsequent Transfer

Petitioner asks for an order enjoining Respondents from transferring Petitioner outside the jurisdiction of this Court while this matter is pending. ECF No. 4, at 15. This request is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of habeas jurisdiction. It is well settled that jurisdiction over a habeas petition attaches at the time the petition is filed and is not defeated by the petitioner's subsequent transfer outside the district. *Rumsfeld v. Padilla*, 542 U.S. 426, 441 n.8 (2004) ("When the Government moves a habeas petitioner after she properly files a petition naming her immediate custodian, the District Court retains jurisdiction and may direct the writ to any respondent within its jurisdiction who has legal authority to effectuate the prisoner's release"); *Mujahid v. Daniels*, 413 F.3d 991, 994–95 (9th Cir. 2005) ("Jurisdiction attaches on the initial filing for habeas corpus relief, and it is not destroyed by a transfer of the petitioner and accompanying custodial change."). Because Petitioner was detained within this District at the time the Petition was filed, this Court's jurisdiction is secure regardless of any subsequent transfer. Accordingly, there is no legal basis for enjoining Respondents from exercising the Attorney General's statutory authority

to determine the place of detention. Accordingly, emergency injunctive relief barring any transfer is neither necessary to preserve jurisdiction nor appropriate under the *Winter* factors.

Moreover, Petitioner's request lacks merit and impermissibly seeks to circumvent the Attorney General's discretionary authority to "arrange for appropriate places of detention for aliens detained pending ... a decision on removal." 8 U.S.C. § 1231(g)(1). The Attorney General's power to determine the place of detention for aliens pending removal proceedings is discretionary. *See e.g.*, *Van Dinh v. Reno*, 197 F.3d 427, 433 (10th Cir. 1999) (explaining that the Attorney General's power to transfer immigrant detainees arises from 8 U.S.C. § 1231(g)(1)); *GandarillasZambrana v. Bd. Of Immigr. Appeals*, 44 F.3d 1251, 1256 (4th Cir. 1995) ("The INS necessarily has the authority to determine the location of detention of an alien in deportation proceedings . . . and therefore, to transfer aliens from one detention center to another."); *Comm. of Cent. Am. Refugees v. INS*, 795 F.2d 1434, 1440 (9th Cir.), *amended by* 807 F.2d 769 (9th Cir. 1986) ("CCAR") (recognizing "the Attorney General's broad discretion in exercising his authority to choose the place of detention for deportable aliens"); *Rios-Berrios v. Immigr. & Naturalization Serv.*, 776 F.2d 859, 863 (9th Cir. 1985) (stating that the Court was not opining on whether the detainee should have been transferred to a different state, as that is a decision for the Attorney General); *Sasso v. Milhollan*, 735 F. Supp. 1045, 1048 (S.D. Fla. 1990) ("Congress . . . has squarely placed the responsibility of determining where aliens are to be detained within the sound discretion of the Attorney General.").

The Court lacks jurisdiction under 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) to review the Attorney General's discretionary power to choose the place of detention for aliens. That section provides that "no court has jurisdiction to review any decision or action the Attorney General has discretion to make 'under this subchapter,'" including decisions made under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(g)(1). *Van Dinh*, 197 F.3d at 433-34; *see also CCAR*, 795 F.2d at 1441 (affirming district court's decision that "prudential considerations precluded it from exercising its jurisdiction to avoid involving itself in the supervision of the Attorney

General's daily exercise of his discretion to select the place of detention of aliens in his custody").

Petitioner may not circumvent this jurisdictional bar to review of the Attorney General's discretionary decisions regarding the location of detention by recasting his claims as a due process issue. Because Petitioner's claim is ultimately a challenge to the Attorney General's discretionary authority under 8 U.S.C. §§ 1229 and 1231(g)(1), it should be denied for lack of jurisdiction. 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii) and (g); *Latu v. Ashcroft*, 375 F.3d 1012, 1019 (10th Cir. 2004); *Van Dinh*, 197 F.3d at 433-34; *cf. Torres-Aguilar v. INS*, 246 F.3d 1267, 1271 (9th Cir. 2001) ("Although we retain jurisdiction to review due process challenges, a petitioner may not create the jurisdiction that Congress chose to remove simply by cloaking an abuse of discretion argument in constitutional garb.").

VIII. Hearing

Respondents submit that the Court may resolve this matter on the existing record and without a hearing. If, however, the Court determines that a hearing would be helpful, Federal Respondents will appear and present their position.

VI. Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Federal Respondents respectfully submit this Response to the Petition and Motion for a Temporary Restraining Order and request that the Court resolve the Petition consistent with its prior rulings.

Respectfully submitted this 6th day of February 2026.

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