

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
SAN ANTONIO DIVISION

[REDACTED]

Petitioner

V.

Case No. 5:26-cv-134

Agency File [REDACTED]

PAMELA BONDI, U. S. Attorney General;

KRISTI NOEM, Secretary of the
United States Department of Homeland
Security;

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY;

EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW;

FIELD OFFICE DIRECTOR, San Antonio Field Office,
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement,;

ASSISTANT FIELD OFFICE DIRECTOR, San Antonio
Field Office, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement,

Defendants-Respondents

**VERIFIED PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS
AND COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

The petitioner, [REDACTED] submits this Verified Petition for Writ of
Habeas Corpus and Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief, by and through
undersigned counsel, and alleges as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1.  is in the physical custody of Respondents at the South Texas Family Immigration Processing Center (ICE) located in Dilley, Texas. He is unlawfully detained pursuant mandatory detention policies recently adopted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR).
2. Petitioner has been detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) since December 19, 2025, without a bond hearing.
3. Petitioner is currently in §1229a removal proceedings with the next hearing scheduled for July 6, 2027.
4. Prolonged detention under § 1226 (a) or §236(a) without an individualized custody determination violates the Immigration and Nationality Act, its implementing regulations, and the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.
5. Petitioner seeks immediate release or, at a minimum, a constitutionally adequate bond hearing before a neutral adjudicator.
6. While the petitioner’s detention is pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226, the respondents are treating him otherwise under 8 U.S.C. § 1225.
7. Petitioner is charged with having entered the United States without admission or parole at an unknown time and unknown place years ago sometime in 2019 as a minor with his mother. See 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(A)(i). Based on this allegation, DHS and EOIR deem Petitioner subject to mandatory detention as

an “applicant for admission” who is “seeking admission” under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) and therefore subject to mandatory detention.

8. DHS and EOIR each have nationwide policies mandating the detention of all persons who entered without admission or parole, regardless of whether that person was apprehended upon arrival. Most recently, on September 5, 2025, in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025), the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) held that all persons who have entered the United States without admission or parole are now subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A).
9. Petitioner’s detention based on § 1225(b)(2) violates the plain language of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Section 1225(b)(2)(A) does not apply to individuals like Petitioner, who previously entered and are now residing in the United States. Instead, such individuals are subject to a different statute, § 1226(a), that allows for release on conditional parole or bond. Indeed, § 1226(a) expressly applies to people who, like Petitioner, are charged as inadmissible for having entered the United States without admission or parole.
10. Accordingly, Petitioner seeks a writ of habeas corpus. Petitioner requests an order requiring his release unless the respondents provide a new bond hearing under § 1226(a) within fourteen days.

JURISDICTION

11. This action arises under the Constitution of the United States of America, 28 U. S. C. § 2241 et seq. (habeas corpus), the Immigration and Nationality Act

(INA), 8 U. S. C. § 1101 et seq., Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), 5 U. S. C. §§ 555(b), 701, et seq.

12. The Court has jurisdiction over this case under 28 U. S. C. § 2241 (habeas corpus), and § 1331 (federal question).

13. The Court may grant relief pursuant to the U.S. Const., art. I, § 9, cl. 2 (Suspension Clause), 28 U. S. C. § 1651 (All Writs Act), 28 U. S. C. §§ 2201–02 (declaratory relief), 28 U. S. C. § 2241 (habeas corpus), and 5 U. S. C. §§ 701 et seq. (Administrative Procedure Act).

VENUE

14. Venue is proper in this district under 28 U. S. C. §§ 1391(e)(1) & 2241 because: (1) “a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred” in this district; and (2) this is the district where the “the custodian can be reached by service of process.” *Rasul v. Bush*, 542 U. S. 466, 478–79 (2004).

15. Additionally, the Petitioner is being held in the custody of the respondents in this district.

PARTIES

16. Petitioner,  is a citizen of Guatemala. He was present in the United States as a result of entering the United States sometime in 2019, via the border, and was recently arrested and placed in detention by the respondents. He is being held in ICE custody at the South Texas Family

Immigration Processing Center (ICE) located in Dilley, Texas (ICE), under the jurisdiction of the respondents.

17. Respondent, **Pamela Bondi**, is the Attorney General of the United States. She is responsible for the Department of Justice, of which the Executive Office for Immigration Review and the immigration court system it operates is a component agency. She is sued in her official capacity
18. Respondent, **Kristi Noem**, is sued in her official capacity as the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Because ICE is a subagency for the DHS, Secretary Noem is a legal custodian of the Petitioner, and is responsible for the prolonged detention of the Petitioner.
19. Respondent, **U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**, is the federal agency responsible for implementing and enforcing the INA, including the detention and removal of noncitizens.
20. Respondent, **Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR)**, is the federal agency responsible for implementing and enforcing the INA in removal proceedings, including for custody redeterminations in bond hearings.
21. Defendant, **Field Office Director**, San Antonio Field Office, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is sued in his or her official capacity. In this capacity, the Field Office Director has jurisdiction over the detention facility in which the petitioner is held, is authorized to release the petitioner, and is a legal custodian of the petitioner

22. Defendant, **Assistant Field Office Director**, San Antonio Field Office, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is sued in his or her official capacity. In this capacity, the Assistant Field Office Director has jurisdiction over the detention facility in which the petitioner is held, is authorized to release the petitioner, and is a legal custodian of the petitioner.

EXHAUSTION OF REMEDIES

23. No exhaustion is required for the petitioner's habeas claim because "Section 2241 itself does not impose an exhaustion requirement," *Santiago-Lugo v. Warden*, 785 F. 3d 467, 474 (CA11 2015)," and because "a petitioner need not exhaust his administrative remedies 'where the administrative remedy will not provide relief commensurate with the claim,' " *Boz v. United States*, 248 F. 3d 1299, 1300 (CA11 2001), abrogated on other grounds recognized by *Santiago-Lugo*, 785 F. 3d, at 474–75 n. 5 (citation omitted).
24. No statute, regulation, or other legal source with binding authority exists to provide the remedy that the petitioner's habeas claims seek to remedy.
25. Further, "[b]ecause the BIA does not have the power to decide constitutional claims—like the validity of a federal statute— . . . certain due process claims need not be administratively exhausted." *Warsame v. U. S. Att'y Gen.*, 796 Fed. Appx. 993, 1006 (CA11 2020); accord *Haitian Refugee Ctr., Inc. v. Nelson*, 872 F. 2d 1555, 1561 (CA11 1989), *aff'd sub nom. McNary v. Haitian Refugee Ctr., Inc.*, 498 U. S. 479 (1991) (exhaustion had "no bearing" where petitioner sought to make a constitutional challenge to procedures adopted by the INS).

26. The petitioner urgently seeks and is entitled to habeas relief because he has no meaningful opportunity to challenge the constitutionality of his detention through any available administrative process. See *Boumediene v. Bush*, 553 U. S. 723, 783 (2008).
27. And with respect to the petitioner's APA claim, an agency's failure to take action is reviewable agency action, *Norton v. S. Utah Wilderness Alliance*, 542 U. S. 55, 61–62 (2004), and there are no administrative remedies available that the petitioner is required to exhaust under *Darby v. Cisneros*, 509 U. S. 137 (1993).

REQUIREMENTS OF 28 U.S.C. § 2243

28. The Court must grant the petition for writ of habeas corpus or order Respondents to show cause “forthwith,” unless the petitioner is not entitled to relief. 28 U.S.C. § 2243. If an order to show cause is issued, the Respondents must file a return “within three days unless for good cause additional time, not exceeding twenty days, is allowed.” *Id.*
29. Habeas corpus is “perhaps the most important writ known to the constitutional law . . . affording as it does a *swift* and imperative remedy in all cases of illegal restraint or confinement.” *Fay v. Noia*, 372 U.S. 391, 400 (1963) (emphasis added). “The application for the writ usurps the attention and displaces the calendar of the judge or justice who entertains it and receives prompt action from him within the four corners of the application.” *Yong v. I.N.S.*, 208 F. 3d 1116, 1120 (CA 9 2000)(citation omitted); *See also, Johnson v. Rogers*, 917 F.2d 1283, 1284 (10th Cir. 1990).

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

30. [REDACTED] is a native and citizen of Guatemala.
31. [REDACTED] initially entered the U.S. in 2019 as a minor of age six without inspection or admission at an unknown place.
32. His entry was undetected by any immigration officials.
33. [REDACTED] has a pending asylum claim that was timely filed and has a case pending in the immigration court with next hearing date of July 6, 2027.
34. Some six years after his entry, the petitioner was encountered by immigration officials and has been detained since.
35. The respondents (as well as the immigration judges) are refusing to acknowledge that the petitioner is not subject to mandatory detention and the immigration judges are refusing to take jurisdiction.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

8 U.S.C. § 1225 & §1226

36. The INA prescribes three basic forms of detention for the vast majority of noncitizens in removal proceedings.
37. First, 8 U.S.C. § 1226 authorizes the detention of noncitizens in standard removal proceedings before an Immigration Judge (IJ). See 8 U.S.C. § 1229a. Individuals in § 1226(a) detention are generally entitled to a bond hearing at the outset of their detention, see 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.19(a), 1236.1(d), while noncitizens who have been arrested, charged with, or convicted of certain crimes are subject to mandatory detention, see 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c).

38. Second, the INA 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 referred to under § 1225(b)(2). Most aliens are placed into these “regular” proceedings, however there are exceptions, such as the removal of someone who has re-entered illegally after a prior removal or whether the alien has been convicted of an aggravated felony. Although not limited to these two exceptions, these two exceptions are relevant to this complaint and are explained in detail below.
39. Last, the INA also provides for detention of noncitizens who have been ordered removed, including individuals in withholding-only proceedings, see 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)–(b).
40. This case concerns the detention provisions at §§ 1226(a) and 1225(b)(2).
41. 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).
42. Following the enactment of the IIRIRA, EOIR drafted new regulations explaining that, in general, people who entered the country without admission or parole 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).

43. Thus, in the decades that followed, most people who entered without admission or parole and were placed in standard removal proceedings received bond hearings, unless their criminal history rendered them ineligible. That practice was consistent with many more decades of prior practice, in which noncitizens who were not deemed “arriving” were entitled to a custody hearing before an IJ or other hearing officer. See 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a) (1994); see also H.R. Rep. No. 104-469, pt. 1, at 229 (1996) (noting that § 1226(a) simply “restates” the detention authority previously found at § 1252(a)).
44. On July 8, 2025, ICE, “in coordination with” the Department of Justice, announced a new policy that rejected this well-established understanding of the statutory framework and reversed decades of practice.
45. The new policy, entitled “Interim Guidance Regarding Detention Authority for Applicants for Admission,” claims that all persons who entered the United States without admission or parole shall now be deemed “applicants for admission” under 8 U.S.C. § 1225, and therefore are subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A). The policy applies regardless of when a person is apprehended, and affects those who have resided in the United States for months, years, and even decades.
46. On September 5, 2025, the BIA adopted this same position in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*. There, the Board held that all noncitizens who entered the

United States without admission or parole are considered applicants for admission who are seeking admission and are ineligible for IJ bond hearings.

47. Dozens of federal courts have rejected Respondents' new interpretation of the INA's detention authorities.

48. Notably, long before ICE or the BIA changed its position nationwide, IJs in the Tacoma, Washington, immigration court stopped providing bond hearings for persons who entered the United States without admission or parole and who have since resided here. The Honorable Court in Washington held that such a reading of the INA is likely unlawful and that § 1226(a), not § 1225(b), applies to noncitizens who are not apprehended upon arrival to the United States. *Rodriguez Vazquez v. Bostock*, 779 F. Supp. 3d 1239 (W.D. Wash. 2025).

49. Since the *Rodriguez Vazquez* preliminary injunction decision, court after court has adopted the same reading of the INA's detention authorities and rejected ICE's new policy and EOIR's new interpretation. See, e.g., *Gomes v. Hyde*, No. 1:25-CV-11571-JEK, 2025 WL 1869299 (D. Mass. July 7, 2025); *Diaz Martinez v. Hyde*, No. CV 25-11613-BEM, --- F. Supp. 3d ----, 2025 WL 2084238 (D. Mass. July 24, 2025); *Rosado v. Figueroa*, No. CV 25-02157, PHX DLR (CDB), 2025 WL 2337099 (D. Ariz. Aug. 11, 2025), report and recommendation adopted, No. CV-25-02157-PHX-DLR (CDB), 2025 WL 2349133 (D. Ariz. Aug. 13, 2025); *Lopez Benitez v. Francis*, No. 25 CIV. 5937 (DEH), 2025 WL 2371588 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 13, 2025); *Maldonado v. Olson*, No. 0:25-cv-03142-SRN-SGE, 2025 WL 2374411 (D.

Minn. Aug. 15, 2025); *Arrazola-Gonzalez v. Noem*, No. 5:25-cv-01789-ODW (DFMx), 2025 WL 2379285 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 15, 2025); *Romero v. Hyde*, No. 25-11631-BEM, 2025 WL 2403827 (D. Mass. Aug. 19, 2025); *Samb v. Joyce*, No. 25 CIV. 6373 (DEH), 2025 WL 2398831 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 19, 2025); *Ramirez Clavijo v. Kaiser*, No. 25-CV-06248-BLF, 2025 WL 2419263 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 21, 2025); *Leal-Hernandez v. Noem*, No. 1:25-cv-02428-JRR, 2025 WL 2430025 (D. Md. Aug. 24, 2025); *Kostak v. Trump*, No. 3:25-cv-01093-JE-KDM, 2025 WL 2472136 (W.D. La. Aug. 27, 2025); *Jose J.O.E. v. Bondi*, No. 25-CV-3051 (ECT/DJF), --- F. Supp. 3d ----, 2025 WL 2466670 (D. Minn. Aug. 27, 2025) *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-cv-12486-BRM-EAS, 2025 WL 2496379 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025); *Vasquez Garcia v. Noem*, No. 25-cv-02180-DMS-MM, 2025 WL 2549431 (S.D. Cal. Sept. 3, 2025); *Zaragoza Mosqueda v. Noem*, No. 5:25-CV-02304 CAS (BFM), 2025 WL 2591530 (C.D. Cal. Sept. 8, 2025); *Pizarro Reyes v. Raycraft*, No. 25-CV-12546, 2025 WL 2609425 (E.D. Mich. Sept. 9, 2025); *Sampiao v. Hyde*, No. 1:25-CV-11981-JEK, 2025 WL 2607924 (D. Mass. Sept. 9, 2025); *see also, e.g., Palma Perez v. Berg*, No. 8:25CV494, 2025 WL 2531566, at *2 (D. Neb. Sept. 3, 2025) (noting that “[t]he Court tends to agree” that § 1226(a) and not § 1225(b)(2) authorizes detention); *Jacinto v. Trump*, No. 4:25-cv-03161-JFB-RCC, 2025 WL 2402271 at *3 (D. Neb. Aug. 19, 2025) (same); *Anicasio v. Kramer*, No. 4:25-cv-03158-JFB-RCC, 2025 WL 2374224 at *2 (D. Neb. Aug. 14, 2025) (same).

50. Courts have uniformly rejected DHS's and EOIR's new interpretation because it defies the INA. As the *Rodriguez Vazquez* court and others have explained, the plain text of the statutory provisions demonstrates that § 1226(a), not § 1225(b), applies to people like Petitioners.
51. Subsection 1226(a) applies by default to all persons "pending a decision on whether the [noncitizen] is to be removed from the United States." These removal hearings are held under § 1229a, to "decid[e] the inadmissibility or deportability of a[] [noncitizen]."
52. The text of § 1226 also explicitly applies to people charged as being inadmissible, including those who entered without admission or parole. See 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c)(1)(E). Subparagraph (E)'s reference to such people 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*, 779 F. Supp. 3d at 1257 (citing *Shady Grove Orthopedic Assocs., P.A. v. Allstate Ins. Co.*, 559 U.S. 393, 400 (2010)).
53. Section 1226 therefore leaves no doubt that it applies to people who face charges of being inadmissible to the United States, including those who are present without admission or parole.
54. By contrast, § 1225(b) applies to people arriving at U.S. ports of entry or who 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). 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 v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281, 287 (2018).

55. Accordingly, the mandatory detention provision of § 1225(b)(2) does not apply to people like the petitioner, who have already entered and were residing in the United States at the time they were apprehended.

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

COUNT I:

Unlawful Detention in Violation of Due Process

56. The allegations in paragraphs 1-55 are realleged and incorporated herein.
57. The government may not deprive a person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. U.S. Const. amend. V. “Freedom from imprisonment—from government custody, detention, or other forms of physical restraint—lies at the heart of the liberty that the Clause protects.” *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 690 (2001).
58. The petitioner has a fundamental interest in liberty and being free from official restraint.
59. The government’s detention of the petitioner without a bond redetermination hearing to determine whether they are a flight risk or danger to others violates their right to due process.

60. Therefore, the petitioner is entitled to a writ of habeas corpus granting him a bond hearing conducted either by the Court, or by the Immigration Judge, with the burden of proof upon the government to demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the petitioner is a danger or a flight risk.

**COUNT II:
Violation of the Administrative Procedures Act**

61. The allegations in paragraphs 1-55 are realleged and incorporated herein.

62. The purpose of the Administrative Procedures Act (“APA”) is to prevent abuse of discretion by federal agencies by granting federal judiciary authority to review the actions of such agencies.

63. The APA also empowers Federal Courts to review federal agencies to “compel agency action unlawfully withheld or *unreasonably* delayed”. 5 U.S.C. § 706(1) (emphasis added).

64. The Court may also hold unlawful and set aside agency action that, inter alia, is found to be “arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law”. 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A); or “without observance of procedure required by law.” 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(D). “Agency action” includes, in relevant part, “an agency rule, order, license, sanction, relief or the equivalent or denial thereof, or *failure to act*.” 5 U.S.C. § 551(13)(emphasis added).

65. The dramatic reversal of past policy without explanation regarding the applications of § 1225 and § 1226 by the Board of Immigration Appeals, raises legal issues under the APA in the following way: the recent decisions by the BIA to abandon decades-old practice of bond hearings under 1226(a)

and in violation of Congressional intent and statutes, is a violation of the APA.

66. The APA, therefore, grants this Court authority to review that agency action (i.e. refusal to determine whether the appeal overcomes the grounds for denial) to determine whether such agency action constitutes an “abuse of discretion” or has been “unreasonably delayed” in violation of the APA.

**COUNT III:
Violation of the Immigration and Nationality Act**

67. The allegations in paragraphs 1-55 are realleged and incorporated herein.

68. 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 the grounds of inadmissibility. As relevant here, it does not apply to those who previously entered the country and have been residing in the United States prior to being apprehended and placed in removal proceedings by Respondents. Such noncitizens are detained under § 1226(a), unless they are subject to § 1225(b)(1), § 1226(c), or § 1231.

69. The application of § 1225(b)(2) to Petitioners unlawfully mandates their continued detention and violates the INA.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, the petitioner prays that the Court grant the following relief:

- (a) Assume jurisdiction over this matter;
- (b) Set this matter for expedited consideration pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1657;

- (c) Issue a writ of habeas corpus clarifying that the statutory basis for petitioner's detention is 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) and that 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) does not apply to petitioner;
- (d) Order the respondents to refrain from transferring the petitioner out of the jurisdiction of this Court during the pendency of this proceeding and while the petitioner remains in the respondents' custody;
- (e) Alternatively, grant the petitioner a writ of habeas corpus ordering that the petitioner be afforded bond hearing conducted either by the Court, or by the Immigration Judge, with the burden of proof upon the government to demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the petitioner is a danger or a flight risk;
- (f) Award petitioner attorneys' fees and costs under the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. § 2412, and on any other basis justified under law; and
- (g) Grant any other and further relief that the Court deems just and proper.

Dated January 13, 2026

/s/Bonnie Smerdon
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**VERIFICATION BY SOMEONE ACTING ON THE PETITIONER'S BEHALF
PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 2242**

I, Bonnie Smerdon, am submitting this verification on behalf of the petitioner because I am the petitioner's attorney. I am acting on behalf of the petitioner,  based on discussions with himself and his legal parent. On the basis of these discussions and reviewing the record, I hereby verify that the statements made in the foregoing Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Dated: January 13, 2026

/s/Bonnie Smerdon

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