

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA**

Antonio CANDIDO MENDOZA,

Petitioner,

v.

Kristi NOEM, in her official capacity as Secretary
of the Department of Homeland Security;

Todd LYONS, in his official capacity as Acting
Director of United States Immigration and Customs
Enforcement;

David EASTERWOOD, in his official capacity as
Acting Director, St. Paul Field Office, U.S.
Immigration and Customs Enforcement;

Respondents.

Case No. 26-cv-306

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

A #



INTRODUCTION

1. This petition seeks immediate release, or in the alternative declaratory relief providing that Eliseo Medina Merino ("Petitioner") is subject to detention by the Department of Homeland Security's ("DHS") U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") only under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) and that he should either be immediately released or an Immigration Judge must hold a custody redetermination hearing under 8 C.F.R. § 1236 to allow Petitioner the opportunity to seek a bond for his release from custody. ICE has been detaining Petitioner since January 14, 2026 at Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

2. This petition also requests that the Court specifically enjoin Respondents from moving Petitioner outside of the District of Minnesota in the Order to Show Cause. For this injunction to be included in the Order to Show Cause would avoid the repetitive briefing and strain on the Court's resources presented by a motion for a temporary restraining order.
3. Petitioner is a citizen of Mexico who has resided in the United States for more than twenty years, since November of 2004. Petitioner has a nine year old US citizen child. Petitioner filed an I-360 VAWA Petition with USCIS on November 10, 2024, and USCIS issued a Prima Facie Determination on November 10, 2025 reflecting that Petitioner had established that he was prima facie eligible for the immigration benefit.
4. Counsel believes Petitioner is currently detained by ICE at Fort Snelling, MN.
5. On September 5, 2025, the Board of Immigration Appeals ("BIA") issued a precedential decision that unlawfully reinterprets sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act ("INA") pertaining to the issue of whether the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has mandatory or permissive authority to detain certain noncitizens placed in removal proceedings. *See Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216 (BIA 2025). Prior to that decision, noncitizens such as Petitioner, who had lived in the United States for many years, after being detained and released at the border under an Order of Release on Recognizance ("OREC) and who were later apprehended by ICE in the interior of the country, were determined to be subject to detention pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) and therefore eligible to seek bond

hearings before Immigration Judges (“IJs”). Under the erroneous legal framework set forth by the BIA in *Yajure Hurtado*, and in contradiction of nearly 30 years of legal precedent and the plain language of the INA, DHS and its subcomponent ICE now consider Petitioner and others similarly situated to him to be subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). Applying the interpretation of these provisions as set forth in *Yajure Hurtado*, Respondents deny Petitioner any opportunity to seek release on bond during the pendency of his removal proceedings.

6. Petitioner’s detention pursuant to § 1225(b)(2)(A) violates the plain language of the INA and its implementing regulations. Petitioner, who has resided in the U.S. for more than twenty-five years, should not be deemed an “applicant for admission” who is “seeking admission.” Rather, he should be immediately released or in the alternative declared to be detained pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), permitting her to seek release on conditional parole or bond.
7. Petitioner seeks immediate relief or in the alternative declaratory relief that he is subject to detention under § 1226(a) and its implementing regulations and asks that this Court either order Respondents to release Petitioner from their custody or provide him with a bond hearing before an IJ.

CUSTODY

8. Petitioner is currently in the custody of ICE at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. He is therefore in the custody of the DHS within the meaning of the habeas corpus statute. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2241.

JURISDICTION & VENUE

9. Petitioner invokes the jurisdiction of this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question); 28 U.S.C. § 2241 (habeas corpus); and Art. I, § 9, cl. 2 of the U.S. Constitution (“Suspension Clause”).
10. This Court may grant relief to Petitioner pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241 *et seq.* (habeas corpus); 28 U.S.C. § 2201 *et seq.* (Declaratory Judgment Act); 28 U.S.C. § 1651 (All Writs Act); 5 U.S.C. § 702 (Administrative Procedure Act); and the Court’s inherent equitable powers.
11. Federal district courts have jurisdiction to hear habeas claims by noncitizens challenging the lawfulness of their detention. *See Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 687 (2001) (“[T]he primary federal habeas corpus statute, 28 U.S.C. § 2241, confers jurisdiction upon the federal courts to hear these cases.”). Because Petitioner seeks to challenge her custody as a violation of the U.S. Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States, jurisdiction is proper in this court.
12. Venue lies in the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota because it is the judicial district in which Petitioner is currently detained. Venue is also proper in this Court under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e)(1) because Respondents are employees, officers, and agencies of the United States, and because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims occurred in this district.

PARTIES

13. Petitioner, Antonio Candido Mendoza, has lived in the United States since 2004.

Prior to his detention on January 14, 2026, he was residing in Prescott, Wisconsin.

Petitioner is currently in ICE Custody at Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

14. Respondent Kristi Noem is sued in her official capacity as Secretary of Homeland Security. As head of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the federal agency tasked with enforcing immigration laws, Secretary Noem is Petitioner's ultimate legal custodian.

15. Respondent Todd Lyons is sued in his official capacity as Acting Director of ICE.

As ICE's Acting Director, Respondent Lyons is a legal custodian of Petitioner.

16. Respondent David Easterwood is sued in his official capacity as Field Office

Director of the St. Paul Field Office, Enforcement and Removal Operations, ICE.

In his official capacity, Respondent Easterwood is a legal custodian of Petitioner.

REQUIREMENTS OF 28 U.S.C. § 2243

17. The Court must grant the petition for writ of habeas corpus or order Respondents to

show cause "forthwith," unless Petitioner is not entitled to relief. 28 U.S.C. § 2243.

If an order to show cause is issued, Respondents must file a return "within three days unless for good cause additional time, not exceeding twenty days, is allowed."

Id.

18. 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) (citation omitted). "The

writ of habeas corpus, challenging illegality of detention, is reduced to a sham if the trial courts do not act within a reasonable time.” *Jones v. Shell*, 572 F.2d 1278, 1280 (8th Cir. 1978).

19. Due to the nature of this proceeding, Petitioner respectfully asks this Court to expedite proceedings as necessary and practicable for justice.

EXHAUSTION OF LEGAL REMEDIES

20. Further administrative exhaustion is unnecessary in this case as it would be futile.

See, e.g., Eliseo A.A. v. Olson, No. 25-3381, 2025 WL 2886729, at *7 (D. Minn. Oct. 8, 2025).

21. It would be futile for Petitioner to seek a custody redetermination hearing before an IJ because of the BIA’s recent decision holding that anyone who has entered the United States without inspection is now considered an “application for admission” who is “seeking admission” and therefore subject to the INA’s mandatory detention provision under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). *See Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216; *see also Eliseo A.A.*, 2025 WL 2886729, at *7 (“[F]urther administrative review would be futile in light of the BIA’s recent decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, . . . which upheld DHS’s new § 1225 policy and held that immigration judges ‘lack authority to hear bond requests or to grant bond to aliens who are present in the United States without admission.’ Where the agency has already adopted a definitive position, exhaustion serves no purpose.” (citation omitted)).

22. Additionally, the IJ does not have jurisdiction to review Petitioner's claim of unlawful custody in violation of his due process rights, and it would therefore be futile for him to pursue administrative remedies related to that claim. *Cf. Am.-Arab Anti-Discrimination Comm. v. Reno*, 70 F.3d 1045, 1058 (9th Cir. 1995) (“[E]xhaustion would be a futile exercise because the agency does not have jurisdiction to review a selective enforcement claim.”).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

23. The INA prescribes essentially three forms of detention for noncitizens in removal proceedings.

24. First, noncitizens detained pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) are generally entitled to a custody-redetermination hearing—also known as a bond hearing—unless they have been arrested, charged with, or convicted of certain crimes that subject them to mandatory detention. *See* 8 U.S.C. §§ 1226(a), 1226(c) (listing grounds for mandatory detention); *see also* 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.19(a) (providing that Immigration Judges may review custody determinations made by DHS), 1236.1(d) (providing the same).

25. Second, the INA provides for mandatory detention of noncitizens who are subject to expedited removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1), in addition to other recent arrivals who are deemed to be “seeking admission” to the United States under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2).

26. Third, the INA authorizes detention of noncitizens who have received a final order of removal, including those in withholding-only proceedings. 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)-(b).
27. The detention provisions of the INA at 8 U.S.C. §§ 1226(a) and 1225(b)(2) were enacted as part of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (“IIRIRA”) of 1996, Division C of Pub. L. No. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009-546, 300-582 to 3009-583, 3009-585. Section 1226 of the INA was most recently amended earlier this year by the Laken Riley Act, Pub. L. No. 119-1, 139 Stat. 3 (2025).
28. Following enactment of the IIRIRA, the U.S. Department of Justice’s Executive Office for Immigration Review (“EOIR”) drafted new regulations explaining that, in general, individuals who entered the United States without inspection were not considered detained pursuant to § 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.”)
29. In the decades that followed the enactment of the IIRIRA, most noncitizens who entered the United States without inspection and were thereafter detained and placed in standard removal proceedings were considered eligible to seek release on bond and also received bond hearings before an IJ unless their criminal history rendered

them statutorily ineligible. This practice was consistent with many decades of prior practice, in which noncitizens who entered the United States, even without inspection, were entitled to a custody determination hearing before an IJ. In contrast, those who were stopped at the border were only entitled to release on parole. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a) (1994); *see also* H.R. Rep. No. 104-469, pt. 1, at 220 (1996) (noting that 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) simply “restates” the detention authority previously found at 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)).

30. For decades, noncitizens who have entered the United States without inspection, were briefly detained and then released under an OREC, and then resided long-term within the country have been deemed to be detained pursuant to § 1226 and have therefore been deemed entitled to bond hearings before IJs, absent a criminal history that would bar them from such a hearing.

31. In July 2025, however, ICE contravened this longstanding legal framework by beginning to assert that all individuals who entered the country without inspection should be considered to be “seeking admission” and therefore subject to the mandatory-detention provision of 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A).

32. On September 5, 2025, the BIA issued a precedential decision adopting ICE’s new interpretation of the detention provisions of the INA, departing from the plain language of the text of the INA, federal precedent, and long-standing regulations. *See Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216.

33. Respondents’ new legal interpretation of the custody provisions of the INA is plainly contrary to the statutory framework of the INA and its implementing regulations.

For decades, Respondents applied § 1226(a) to individuals similarly situated to Petitioner. Respondents' new policies regarding custody determinations are therefore not only contrary to law, but also arbitrary and capricious in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act ("APA"). This new interpretation of the statutes was also adopted without following the procedural requirements of the APA. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 553.

34. In recent months, numerous federal courts have rejected Respondents' new interpretation of the custody statutes and have instead consistently found that § 1226—not § 1225(b)(2)—authorizes detention of noncitizens who entered without inspection, were briefly detained and released on their own recognizance, and who were later apprehended in the interior of the country. *See, e.g., Khalid B.Q. v. Noem*, No. 25-4584 (D. Minn. Dec. 18, 2025); *Aguilar Maldonado v. Olson*, 795 F. Supp. 3d 1134 (D. Minn. 2025); *Mayamu K.*, No. 25-3035, 2025 WL 3641819; *Jose J.O.E.*, 797 F. Supp. 3d 957; *Eliseo A.A.*, 2025 WL 2886729; *Pizarro Reyes v. Raycraft*, No. 25-cv-12546, 2025 WL 2609425 (E.D. Mich. Sept. 9, 2025); *Sampiao v. Hyde*, 799 F. Supp. 3d 14 (D. Mass. Sept. 9, 2025); *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, 797 F. Supp. 3d 771 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025); *Martinez*, 792 F. Supp. 3d 211; *Lopez Benitez v. Francis*, 795 F. Supp. 3d 475 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 13, 2025); *Garcia Jimenez v. Kramer*, No. 4:25CV03162, 2025 WL 2374223 (D. Neb. Aug. 14, 2025); *Arrazola-Gonzalez v. Noem*, No. 5:25-cv-01789, 2025 WL 2379285 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 15, 2025); *Leal-Hernandez v. Noem*, No. 1:25-cv-02428, 2025 WL 2430025 (D. Md. Aug. 24, 2025).

35. Under *Loper Bright v. Raimondo*, “the role of the reviewing court under the APA is . . . to independently interpret the statute and effectuate the will of Congress subject to constitutional limits.” 603 U.S. 369, 395 (2024). Applying *Loper Bright*, this Court should independently interpret the pertinent statutes and give no weight to the BIA’s expansive and unprecedented interpretation of § 1225(b)(2), as that interpretation conflicts with the plain text of the statute, is contrary to the regulations, and contravenes precedent on the question of jurisdiction for bond proceedings.

36. As discussed above, the detention provisions at issue in this case were enacted as part of the IIRIRA in 1996. Division C of Pub. L. No. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009-546, 300-582 to 3009-583, 3009-585. After the enactment of the IIRIRA, EOIR issued regulations clarifying that individuals who entered the country without inspection were not considered to be detained under § 1225, but rather under § 1226(a). *See* 62 Fed. Reg. 10312, 10323 (Mar. 6 1997).

37. In 1997, after Congress amended the INA through the IIRIRA, EOIR and USCIS’s predecessor agency, Immigration and Naturalization Services, issued an interim rule guiding interpretation and application of the IIRIRA. Specifically, under the heading “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. The agencies thus made clear that individuals who had entered

without inspection were eligible for consideration for bond and bond hearings before IJs under 8 U.S.C. § 1226 and its implementing regulations.

38. The overall statutory framework of the INA also clearly supports that § 1226 applies to individuals who have not been admitted and who entered without inspection. In 2025, Congress added new mandatory-detention grounds to § 1226(c) that apply only to noncitizens who have not been admitted. *See* Laken Riley Act, Pub. L. No. 119-1, 139 Stat. 3 (2025) (codified in relevant part at 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c)(1)(E)).

39. By specifically referencing inadmissibility for entry without inspection as falling within 8 U.S.C. § 1182(6)(A), Congress clearly expressed its will that such individuals are covered by § 1226(a) if they do not have the sort of criminal history identified in the Laken Riley Act. Accordingly, § 1226 plainly applies to noncitizens who entered without inspection and are later charged as inadmissible within the interior of the country, including those who never received an admission or parole.

40. The Supreme Court has explained that 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b) “applies primarily to aliens seeking entry into the United States,” and is generally imposed “at the Nation’s borders and ports of entry, where the Government must determine whether an alien seeking to enter the country is admissible.” *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281, 287, 297 (2018). In contrast, § 1226 “authorizes the Government to detain certain aliens *already in the country* pending the outcome of removal proceedings.” *Id.* at 289 (emphasis added).

41. Further, § 1225(b)(2) specifically applies only to those “seeking admission,” and the definitions provided at the implementing regulations state that an “[a]rriving

alien” is one who is “coming or attempting to come into the United States at a port-of-entry.” 8 C.F.R. § 1.2. The use of the present progressive tense would exclude noncitizens like Petitioner who are initially apprehended in the interior of the country almost two decades after they had entered the country, as they cannot reasonably be considered to be actively “seeking admission” or “coming . . . into the United States” after years spent building a life within the interior of the country, as is the case for Petitioner. *Id.*; see *Martinez v. Hyde*, 792 F. Supp. 3d (D. Mass. July 24, 2025) (citing the use of the present and present-progressive tenses to conclude that 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) does not apply to individuals apprehended in the interior); see also *Al Otro Lado v. McAleenan*, 394 F. Supp. 3d 1168, 1200 (S.D. Cal. 2019) (interpreting the language “is arriving” in 8 U.S.C. § 235(b)(1)(A)(i) and concluding that “[t]he use of the present progressive, like use of the present participle, denotes an ongoing process”).

42. Accordingly, the mandatory detention provision of 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) does not apply to Petitioner, who entered the U.S. 15 years ago, was not initially detained near the border, and was only ever detained recently well within the interior of the country.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

43. Petitioner is a citizen of Mexico.

44. Petitioner was born on 

45. Petitioner has resided in the United States since November of 2004.

46. Petitioner is now detained in ICE Custody. On counsel's information and belief, he is in detention at Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

47. Without relief from this Court, Petitioner faces continued detention without access to a bond hearing.

COUNT I
Violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a)
Unlawful Denial of Bond Hearing

48. Petitioner restates and realleges all paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

49. In light of his manner of entry and the timing and location of his arrest and detention, Petitioner may only be detained, if at all, pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a).

50. Petitioner is entitled to a bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) and associated regulations. *See* 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1(d) & 1003.19(a)-(f).

51. Petitioner has not been, and absent relief from this Court, will not be provided with a bond hearing as required by law.

52. Petitioner's ongoing detention is therefore unlawful.

COUNT II
Violation of the Bond Regulations, 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1, 1003.19, 1236.1 and Unlawful
Denial of Access to Release on Bond

53. Petitioner restates and realleges paragraphs 1 to 47 as if fully set forth herein.

54. The application of § 1225(b)(2) to Petitioner unlawfully mandates his continued detention in violation of 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1, 1003.19, and 1236.1.

COUNT III
Violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)

Unlawful Detention Under This Provision

55. Petitioner restates and realleges paragraphs 1 to 47 as if fully set forth herein.

56. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b) applies to those actively seeking entry to the United States and is generally imposed at the Nation's borders and ports of entry, where the Government must make its initial determination as to whether a noncitizen seeking to enter the country is admissible.

57. Because Petitioner has resided in the United States since 2004, he is neither an arriving alien nor now seeking admission to the United States.

58. Because 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b) does not apply to Petitioner, Respondents' ongoing detention of her under this provision is unlawful.

COUNT IV

Violation of Fifth Amendment Right to Due Process

59. Petitioner restates and realleges paragraphs 1 to 47 as if fully set forth herein.

60. The Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the federal government from depriving any person of "life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." U.S. Const. amend. V.

61. The Constitution generally requires a hearing before the government deprives a person of her liberty. *Zinerman v. Burch*, 494 U.S. 113, 127 (1990). Under the factors set forth in *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 335 (1976), the balance of Petitioner's and Respondents' interests, as well as the balance between the risk of erroneously depriving her of process contrasted with any burden on the government, strongly favor Petitioner's release or, at a minimum, her access to a bond hearing.

62. Petitioner's private interest in freedom from unlawful detention is profound. A person's interest in freedom from detention is "the most elemental of liberty interests" implicated by the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment. *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 50, 529 (2004); *see also Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 690 (2001) ("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.").
63. The risk of erroneously depriving Petitioner of his liberty is exceptionally high. Currently, in addition to being deprived of her freedom, Petitioner is also being deprived of the opportunity to be with his family who rely on him.
64. The government's interest in detaining Petitioner without due process is minimal at most. Immigration detention is civil, and in theory is not intended to be punitive, and it may only be prolonged for a bond-eligible individual if that person is either a danger to the community or unlikely to appear at future immigration proceedings. *See Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 690.
65. Further, the "fiscal and administrative burdens" of providing Petitioner a bond hearing are minimal for the government, particularly when weighed against the significant liberty interests implicated by his ongoing detention. *See Mathews*, 424 U.S. at 334-35.
66. In light of this balance of the factors, Petitioner requests that this Court order his immediate release from custody or provide declaratory relief ordering an IJ to provide him with a bond hearing

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Petitioner prays that this Court will:

- (1) Assume jurisdiction over this matter;
- (2) Issue an order requiring Respondents to show cause within three days as to why this petition should not be granted;
- (3) In the order to show cause, issue an order enjoining Petitioner's removal or transfer outside of this District and the jurisdiction of this Court pending adjudication of this petition;
- (4) Declare that Petitioner's detention is unlawful;
- (5) Issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus ordering Respondents to immediately release Petitioner from custody or provide him with a bond hearing pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) or the Due Process Clause within seven days; and
- (6) Grant Petitioner any further relief that this Court deems to be just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: January 14, 2026

/s/ Graham Ojala-Barbour /s/
Graham Ojala-Barbour
Minnesota Bar No. 0392397
Ojala-Barbour Law Firm, PLLC
1100 7th Street West
Saint Paul, MN 55102
Tel: (651) 214-6284
Email: graham@ojalabarbour.com
ATTORNEY FOR PETITIONER

VERIFICATION

I represent the Petitioner, Antonio Candido Mendoza, and submit this verification on his behalf. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2242 and 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the facts set forth in the foregoing Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus are true and correct.

Executed this 13th day of January, 2026.

/s/ Graham Ojala-Barbour /s/
Graham Ojala-Barbour
Attorney at Law