

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

William Lema-Castro

Diana Lema-Castro

Jane Doe

Petitioner,

v.

Pamela Bondi, Attorney General,

Kristi Noem, Secretary, U.S. Department
of Homeland Security,

Todd M. Lyons, Acting Director of
Immigration and Customs Enforcement,
and

David Easterwood, Acting Director, St.
Paul Field Office Immigration and
Customs Enforcement.

Respondents.

Case No. _____

**VERIFIED PETITION
FOR WRIT OF
HABEAS CORPUS**

Expedited Handling Requested

INTRODUCTION

1. Petitioners, William Lema-Castro, Diana Lema-Castro, and Jane Doe, a minor child whose name is not known, by and through the undersigned attorney, hereby file this petition for a writ of habeas corpus and a complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief to require U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) to release them from ICE detention, or in the alternative to enjoin their transfer to a

facility outside of Minnesota and to provide a bond hearing pending the completion of any immigration proceedings.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question); 28 U.S.C. § 1361 (federal employee mandamus action); 28 U.S.C. § 1651 (All Writs Act); 28 U.S.C. § 2241 (habeas corpus); Art. I, § 9, c. 2 of the U.S. Constitution (“Suspension Clause”); 5 U.S.C. § 702 (waiver of sovereign immunity); and 28 U.S.C. § 2201 (Declaratory Judgment Act).

3. Federal question jurisdiction exists because Petitioners seek to challenge their custody as a violation of the Constitution and the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101 et seq.

4. Federal district courts have jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 to hear habeas petitions by noncitizens challenging the lawfulness or constitutionality of their detention by the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”). *Demore v. Kim*, 538 U.S. 510-516-17 (2003); *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 138 S. Ct. 830, 839-41 (2018); and *Nielsen v. Preap*, 139 S. Ct. 954, 961-63 (2019).

5. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b), (e)(1)(B), and 2241(d) because Petitioners are detained within the District of Minnesota.

6. Venue is also proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e)(1)(A), because Respondents are operating in this district.

PARTIES

7. Petitioners William and Diana Lema-Castro are siblings, ages 19 and 20, and citizens of Ecuador and residents of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Petitioner Jane Doe is, upon information and belief, a minor child who was born in the United States. The Petitioners are currently being held at a detention facility at 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota. Petitioners are under the direct control of the respondents and has no scheduled release date.

8. Respondent Pamela Bondi is being sued in her official capacity as the Attorney General of the United States and the head of the Department of Justice. Attorney General Bondi shares responsibility for implementation and enforcement of the immigration detention statutes, along with Respondent Noem. Attorney General Bondi is a legal custodian of Petitioners.

9. Respondent Kristi Noem is being sued in her official capacity as the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. In this capacity, Secretary Noem is responsible for the administration of the immigration laws pursuant to [8 U.S.C. § 1103\(a\)](#), routinely transacts business in the District of Minnesota, supervises the Fort Snelling ICE Field Office, and is legally responsible for pursuing Petitioners' detention and removal. As such, Respondent Noem is a legal custodian of Petitioners.

10. Respondent Todd M. Lyons is the Acting Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and is sued in his official capacity. Defendant Lyons is responsible for Petitioner's detention.

11. Respondent David Easterwood is being sued in his official capacity as the Acting Field Office Director for the Fort Snelling Field Office for ICE within DHS. In that capacity, Field Director Easterwood has supervisory authority over the ICE agents responsible for detaining Petitioners. The address for the Fort Snelling Field Office is 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

12. Petitioners are residents of Minneapolis. Jane Doe is a U.S. Citizen, the siblings are citizens of Ecuador. William and Diana Lema Castro have both lived in the United States for more than two years.

13. Both Lema-Castro siblings have work permits and are applicants for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. William has an immigration attorney. Neither of the Lema-Castro siblings have final removal orders.

14. William was driving his sister, friend, and dog in a truck on 19th Street in South Minneapolis, when ICE agents began following them. They were able to place a brief call to their mom and their aunt before they were pulled over by ICE agents in vehicles, but their Aunt expressed that the call was cut out as Petitioners were arrested. Petitioners were taken into custody and taken to the Whipple. None of their family or friends have heard from them since.

15. This arrest is part of an operation in Hennepin and Ramsey counties called “Operation Metro Surge.” This operation has involved hundreds of masked, unidentified individuals in unmarked vehicles (many with illegally covered or mismatched license plates) holding themselves out as ICE agents but largely refusing

to identify themselves by name or to present warrants, physically assaulting pedestrians, pepper spraying and arresting citizen observers, hitting passersby with vehicles, and generally attempting to take as many immigrants as possible into custody regardless of the constitutionality of their actions. *See, e.g., Compl., Tincher et. al. v. Noem*, No. 0:25-cv-04669. (D. Minn. 12/17/2025).

16. Since the operation began on December 1, 2025, the number of immigration officials in the twin city metro area has increased fourfold, and with them these new agents have brought a similarly massive increase in unconstitutional, unlawful, and downright violent behavior towards citizens and non-citizens alike. The people of Minnesota—of all races, nationalities, and citizenship status—are united in their shock and fear at the events of the past six weeks, and are begging for the attacks on their community to stop.

17. Given the massive volume of perceived non-citizens being taken off the streets, Respondents are running out of physical space to continue detaining people. Detainees are being held in cramped quarters at the federal building, before being quickly sent to remote locations across Minnesota or to facilities as far away as El Paso, Texas. It is likely, based on what has been happening to others similarly situated, that Petitioners will be on a flight to Texas imminently.

18. Petitioners have been brought to the Whipple, the federal detention center in Fort Snelling, Minnesota. Their loved ones have not heard from them since.

19. Detaining Petitioners is an expensive and pointless endeavor. Petitioners respectfully seek the opportunity to contest the illegality of their detention.

20. Pending the adjudication of this Petition, Petitioners further seek an order restraining the Respondents from transferring Petitioner to a location outside of the State of Minnesota, so that the jurisdiction of this Court is not impeded, and so that Petitioner remains accessible to legal counsel and loved ones.

STANDARD OF LAW

21. Courts have long recognized the significance of the habeas statute in protecting individuals from unlawful detention. The “Great Writ” has been referred to by US Courts as “perhaps the most important writ known to the constitutional law of England, 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). A petitioner may seek a writ of habeas corpus when their custody violates the US Constitution or a federal law. [28 U.S.C. § 22441\(c\)\(3\)](#), which should be granted if the petitioner meets their burden of proof—a preponderance of evidence. *Aditya W. H. v. Trump*, [782 F. Supp. 3d 691, 703](#) (D. Minn. 2025).

22. The Court must grant a petition for writ of habeas corpus or issue an order to show cause to the respondents “forthwith,” unless the petitioner is not entitled to relief. [28 U.S.C. § 2243](#). If an order to show cause is issued, the Court must require respondents to file a return “within three days unless for good cause additional time, not exceeding twenty days, is allowed.” *Id.*

23. Detained immigrants petitioning under [28 U.S.C. § 2241](#) face no statutory exhaustion requirements. *Jose J.O.E. v. Bondi*, [797 F. Supp. 3d 957, 965](#) (D. Minn. 2025). Nor is a judicially imposed prudential exhaustion requirement appropriate

where, as here: time is of the essence, facts are largely undisputed, and the parties' disagreement is based on a legal conclusion. *Id.* at 967-68.

24. Other courts in the Eighth Circuit have similarly declined to require prudential exhaustion when evaluating a detained immigrant's habeas corpus petition under similar circumstances—to address a question of statutory interpretation that does not require developing a factual record, and where the agency is demonstrably unlikely to reverse its course. *Giron Reyes v. Lyons*, [2025 WL 2712427](#) at *3 (N.D. Iowa Sept. 23, 2025).

25. “[T]he Due Process Clause applies to all ‘persons’ within the United States, including [immigrants], whether their presence here is lawful, unlawful, temporary, or permanent.” *Zadvydas v. Davis*, [533 U.S. 678, 693](#) (2001).

26. In July of 2025, Respondent DHS began ignoring the decades-long consensus of how [8 U.S.C. § 1225\(b\)\(2\)](#) should be interpreted, which the Board of Immigration Appeals (“BIA”) articulated in a subsequent ruling. *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, [29 I&N Dec. 216](#) (BIA Sept. 5, 2025). Respondents suddenly claim that individuals who have been residing within the United States for more than two years are somehow “seeking admission,” simply because they may have pending claims for asylum or other forms of status.

27. However, this Court and the majority around the country have made clear that [8 U.S.C. § 1225\(b\)\(2\)](#) only authorizes detention for noncitizens who are at the border seeking physical entry at the time of detention, not those who have lived within the United States for more than two years, and whose detention is discretionary

and governed by [8 U.S.C. § 1226\(a\)](#). *Eliseo A.A. v. Olson*, Civ. No. 25-3381 (JWB/DJF), [2025 WL 2886729](#) (D. Minn. Oct. 8, 2025); *Mayamu K. v. Bondi*, Civ. No. 25-3035 (JWB/LIB), [2025 WL 3641819](#) (D. Minn. Oct. 20, 2025); *Khalid B.Q. v. Bondi*, Civ. No. 25-4584 (JWB/DJF), [Doc. No. 10](#) (D. Minn. Dec. 18, 2025); *Xuseen A. v. Bondi*, Civ. No. 25-4514 (JWB/DJF), [Doc. No. 16](#) (D. Minn. Dec. 19, 2025); *Vedat C. v. Bondi*, Civ. No. 25-4642 (JWB/DJF), [Doc. No. 9](#) (D. Minn. Dec. 19, 2025).

28. Only under certain circumstances are immigrants subject to ongoing detention without a bond hearing. *See, e.g.*, [8 U.S.C. § 1226\(c\)](#) (individuals with certain criminal convictions may be detained without a bond hearing for the pendency of removal proceedings¹) and [8 U.S.C. § 1225\(b\)\(1\)\(B\)\(iii\)\(IV\)](#) (authorizing mandatory detention of immigrants in expedited removal proceedings).

29. Otherwise, the “default rule” is that detention of immigrants already present in the United States and subject to pending removal proceedings is governed by [8 U.S.C. § 1226\(a\)](#) and its implementing regulations. *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, [583 U.S. 281, 303](#) (2018).

30. Under this default rule, detained immigrants are constitutionally entitled to a bond hearing. *R.E. v. Bondi*, No. 25-CV-3946 (NEB/DLM), [2025 WL 3146312](#) (D. Minn. Nov. 4, 2025). *See also Mayamu K. v. Bondi*, No. 25-3035 (JWB/LIB), [2025](#)

¹ Even when detained under [1226\(c\)](#), immigrants retain due process rights and are entitled to a hearing if the period of detention becomes unreasonable. *See, e.g., Pedro O v. Garland*, [543 F.Supp.3d 733](#) (D. Minn. 2021) (finding a year-long mandatory detention pursuant to [8 U.S.C. § 1226\(c\)](#) without an individualized hearing to violate an immigrant’s due process rights).

U.S. Dist. LEXIS 260661 (D. Minn. Oct. 20, 2025) (holding that an immigrant detained after entry while in asylum proceedings should be held pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), and that the recent DHS policy attempting to reclassify interior arrests under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) so as to hold asylum seekers without a bond hearing is unlawful and unconstitutional).

31. Petitioner Jane Doe is a U.S. citizen, upon information and belief Respondents have no basis for holding her.

32. Petitioners William and Diana are in the process of obtaining Special Immigrant Juvenile status, and were not apprehended anywhere near the border. Respondents presumably racially profiled Petitioner Doe and her friends, and now wrongly assert 8 U.S.C. 1225(b)(2) as a basis for detaining Petitioners by claiming that they are “seeking admission.” The three young friends are in imminent danger of being sent away from their families, and beg this Court for relief.

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

COUNT ONE

Fifth Amendment Due Process

Respondents Deprive Petitioners of an adequate and meaningful process to challenge Petitioner’s ongoing confinement.

33. Petitioners reallege and incorporate by reference the allegations contained above.

34. Petitioners have due process rights as a resident of the United States. *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 693 (2001).

35. Federal courts use the three-part test in *Mathews v. Eldridge* to determine whether civil detention violates a detainee's due process rights. [424 U.S. 319](#) (1976). The elements of this test are: (1) the private interest that the official action affects; (2) the risk that the procedures used will result in an erroneous deprivation of the private interest, and the probable value, if any, of additional or substitute procedural safeguards; and (3) the Government's interest in following the existing procedures, both in achieving their objectives and in the potential burdens of an alternate procedure. *Id.* at 335.

36. Here, all three factors favor the petitioner.

[37.](#) First, Petitioners have a significant private interest at stake. A person's interest in freedom from physical detention is “the most elemental of liberty interests.” *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, [542 U.S. 507, 529, 124 S.Ct. 2633, 159 L.Ed.2d 578](#) (2004); see also *Zadvydas*, [533 U.S. at 690, 121 S.Ct. 2491](#) (“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.”). Petitioners currently experience unlawful detention, under horrific and terrifying conditions, and face likely departure to a State outside the reach of this Court’s jurisdiction.

38. Second, Petitioners will continue to be deprived of this interest if the current procedure (detaining Petitioners without a legal basis) is followed.

39. Lastly, the Government has no legitimate interest in refusing to follow its own rules. Petitioners poses no safety threats to the community. Releasing Petitioner,

or at a minimum holding a bond hearing, would in fact *save* the government the resources and expense of continued imprisonment.

40. The placement of Petitioners in detention pending the resolution of ongoing immigration proceedings violates Petitioners's constitutional rights to due process guaranteed in the Fifth Amendment.

COUNT TWO

Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1226

Petitioners' Ongoing Detention, without the Opportunity for a Bond Hearing, Violates Petitioners' Statutory Right to a Hearing as Guaranteed by 8 U.S.C. § 1226

41. Petitioners reallege and incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained above.

42. Respondents violate the Immigration and Nationality Act by attempting to apply mandatory detention through 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2), to Petitioners.

43. Petitioners is detained, notwithstanding his [pending asylum application, OR continuous presence in the United States for more than the last two years] without being afforded an opportunity to advocate for his release back into [his] community as the law requires.

COUNT THREE

Violation of the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. § 706

Detaining Petitioners Pursuant to an Unlawful Interpretation of 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) violates the Administrative Procedure Act

44. Petitioners re-allege and incorporate by reference each allegation contained in the preceding paragraphs as if set forth fully herein.

45. 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).

46. The APA provides that a “reviewing court shall . . . hold unlawful and set aside agency action, findings, and conclusions found to be . . . without observance of procedure required by law.” 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(D).

47. 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 could properly be detained under § 1226(a), but would then be eligible for release on bond unless they are subject to § 1225(b)(1), § 1226(c), or § 1231.

48. Nonetheless, the Board has adopted a policy and practice of applying § 1225(b)(2) to Petitioner and others in the same position.

49. Respondents through its recent administrative decision failed to articulate any reasoned explanations for new interpretation of the Act. The Board’s decision represents a change in the agencies’ policies and positions that negates the plain language of the Act, the will of Congress, and decades of administrative precedent.

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

REMEDY

51. An available remedy for Respondents' unlawful conduct as outlined in this complaint is for Petitioner to be released.

52. Immigration detention is civil in nature, and as a result Congress must have expressly authorized it by statute, and the detention must be reasonably related to its statutory purpose. *Zadvydas v. Davis*, [533 U.S. 678, 687, 690](#) (2001) (quoting *Jackson v. Indiana*, [406 U.S. 715, 738](#) (1972)).

53. A noncitizen seeking only to challenge the legality of their detention, not the substance of their removal proceedings in immigration court, may properly ask a federal court to find jurisdiction over such a request pursuant to [28 U.S.C. § 2241](#). *See, e.g., Mohammed H. v. Trump*, [786 F. Supp. 3d 1149, 1154–55](#) (D. Minn. 2025).

54. Since Section 1225 does not apply to noncitizens who are in Petitioner's situation—who have been detained while residing within the United States for more than two years, as opposed to those who are detained while in the process of physically entering the United States, the law that Respondents are using to detain Petitioner simply does not apply so as to authorize Petitioner's detention. *See Eliseo A.A. v. Olson*, Civ. No. 25-3381 (JWB/DJF), [2025 WL 2886729](#) (D. Minn. Oct. 8, 2025); *Mayamu K. v. Bondi*, Civ. No. 25-3035 (JWB/LIB), [2025 WL 3641819](#) (D. Minn. Oct. 20, 2025); *Khalid B.Q. v. Bondi*, Civ. No. 25-4584 (JWB/DJF), [Doc. No. 10](#) (D. Minn. Dec. 18, 2025); *Xuseen A. v. Bondi*, Civ. No. 25-4514 (JWB/DJF), [Doc. No. 16](#) (D. Minn. Dec. 19, 2025); *Vedat C. v. Bondi*, Civ. No. 25-4642 (JWB/DJF), [Doc. No. 9](#) (D. Minn. Dec. 19, 2025).

55. When a habeas petitioner’s detention is without legal basis, the typical remedy is release. *Munaf v. Geren*, 553 U.S. 674, 693 (2008) (describing release as the “typical remedy” for “unlawful executive detention”).

56. Respondents will no doubt argue, as they have in similar cases before this Court, that if the Court rules that Petitioner should have been detained pursuant to § 1226, instead of § 1225, then the remedy is a bond hearing as opposed to outright release. *See, e.g., Ahmed A.* Civ. No. 25-4776, Doc. No. 9. at 9-10. However, this Court rejected this argument, saying that:

[A] bond hearing presupposes lawful detention authority under § 1226. Where that authority has not been invoked or established, ordering a bond hearing would treat the absence of statutory authority as a mere procedural irregularity rather than a substantive defect ... Where the record shows Respondents have not identified a valid statutory basis for detention in the first place, the remedy is not to supply one through further proceedings.

Id. at Doc. No. 10 at 6.

57. Here, where detention is unlawfully based on 8 U.S.C. 1225, which does not apply to Petitioner, release is an appropriate remedy.

58. Respondents have absolutely no reason to detain Petitioner Doe, a U.S. citizen, nor do they have a reason to detain two Special Immigrant Juveniles who are not properly under the purview of the purported basis for the detention, 8 U.S.C. 1225(b)(2).

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Petitioners pray that this Court grant the following relief;

(1) Assume jurisdiction over this matter;

- (2) Enjoin Respondents from transferring Petitioners out of the District of Minnesota pending the duration of these proceedings;
- (3) Issue an Order requiring Respondents to show cause as to why Petitioners should not be released immediately;
- (4) Alternatively, issue a writ of habeas corpus requiring Respondents to release Petitioner unless they provide a bond hearing under [8 U.S.C. § 1226\(a\)](#) within seven days; and
- (5) Grant any other and further relief that this Court may deem just and proper.

Jan. 14, 2026`

/s/ Kira A. Kelley

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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 Petitioner because I am Petitioner's attorney. I have discussed the factual assertions in this petition with Petitioner's family and friends, who are also acting on Petitioner's behalf and who I understand to have personal knowledge of the facts alleged herein. I hereby verify that the statements made in the attached Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus, including the statements regarding Petitioner's detention status, are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Jan. 14, 2026

/s/ Kira A. Kelley

Kira A. Kelley, Esq.