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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

Rafael PEÑA TREJO,

Petitioner,

v.

Jason KNIGHT, Field Office Director, Salt Lake City Field Office, U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement, Enforcement and Removal Operations Division; Reggie RADER, Chief of Police for the City of Henderson, Henderson Detention Center; Kristi NOEM, Secretary, United States Department of Homeland Security; Pamela BONDI, Attorney General of the United States,

Respondents.

Case No. 2:26-cv-00197-RFB-DJA

Federal Respondents' Response to the Court's Order to Show Cause (ECF No. 4) Why the Court Should Not Grant Petitioner's Motion for Temporary Restraining Order (ECF No. 2)

Federal Respondents Jason Knight, Kristi Noem and Pamela Bondi, through undersigned counsel, file their response to the Court's order to show cause (ECF No. 4) as to why the Court should not grant the unsigned Motion for Preliminary Injunction (ECF No. 2).

Petitioner's motion should be denied because he has failed to demonstrate that he is entitled to an injunctive relief as his detention is lawful and he has failed to exhaust administrative remedies.

This response is supported by the following memorandum of points and authorities.

Respectfully submitted this 2nd day of February 2026.

TODD BLANCHE
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/s/ Virginia T. Tomova
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Memorandum of Points and Authorities

I. INTRODUCTION

As a general matter, an alien who arrives in the United States and cannot demonstrate his admissibility generally is either promptly removed or detained pending removal proceedings. See 8 U.S.C. §§ 1225(b)(1)(A), (B), and (2)(A). Here, petitioner, Rafael Peña Trejo, an illegal alien, is a citizen of Mexico, who has a long-standing history of violating the immigration laws of the United States. On June 4, 1998, May 25, 2001, and May 29, 2001, United States Border Patrol (USBP) encountered and granted this Petitioner a voluntary return to Mexico three times. *See* I-213, attached as Exhibit A. Petitioner was arrested on January 12, 2026, during a targeted immigration enforcement in compliance with federal law and agency policy, pursuant to an administrative warrant. *Id.*; *see also* Administrative Warrant, attached as Exhibit B.[1] Petitioner was transferred to ICE custody on January 12, 2026, and he is currently detained pursuant to INA § 235, because he is an applicant for admission. Petitioner falls within the definition of an applicant for admission subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. 1225(b)(2). Petitioner has a hearing before an Immigration Judge scheduled for February 2, 2026. *See* Notice to Appear, attached as Exhibit C. Petitioner is currently in removal proceedings before the Executive Office of Immigration Review's Immigration Court. In the meantime, he is challenging temporary detention while the decision is made regarding his removal. In his motion, Petitioner requests that this Court releases him from detention while his removal proceedings are

[1] An administrative warrant has been requested from the agency and will be provided upon receipt.

pending without requiring him to exhaust his administrative remedies. Plaintiff's propositions are against Supreme Court precedent.

Petitioner cannot show a likelihood of success on the merits, because to grant the motion, Petitioner asks this Court to set aside a lawfully enacted regulation and statute, finding both unconstitutionally applied, as alleged violations of the Due Process Clause of the United States Constitution. But as discussed below, the Supreme Court has long recognized Congress's broad power and immunity from judicial control to expel aliens from the country and to detain them while doing so. *See e.g., Shaughnessy v. United States*, 345 U.S. 206, 210 (1953); *Carlson v. Landon*, 342 U.S. 524, 538 (1952). The United States' temporary detention of Petitioner in no way exceeds this broad authority and does not deprive Petitioner of Due Process. *See Demore v. Kim*, 538 U.S. 510, 531 (2003) ("Detention during removal proceedings is a constitutionally permissible part of that process.") Petitioner falls precisely within the statutory definition of aliens subject to mandatory detention without bond found in § 1225(b)(2).

While Petitioner's claims are structured around allegations of unlawful detention authority, his claims attack the decisions rendered (and not yet rendered) by Immigration Judges (IJs) during immigration bond hearings. Petitioner asks this Court to review IJ decisions, which is explicitly barred by statute. Through multiple provisions of 8 U.S.C. § 1252, Congress has unambiguously stripped federal courts of jurisdiction over challenges to the commencement of removal proceedings, including detention pending removal proceedings. Further, Petitioner has failed to exhaust his administrative remedies. Petitioner has not requested a bond hearing before an IJ, instead he wants this Court to release him from detention even though he is subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2) pending his removal proceedings and is violating the immigration laws of the United States. Petitioner cannot show a likelihood of success on the merits because he seeks to circumvent the detention statute under which he is rightfully detained to secure bond hearings to which he is not entitled. Petitioner cannot establish a likelihood of success on the merits, and his motion should be denied.

II. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Before 1996, the federal immigration laws required the detention of aliens who presented at a port of entry but allowed aliens who were already unlawfully present in the United States to obtain release pending removal proceedings. Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act ("IIRIRA") specifically to stop conferring greater privileges and benefits on aliens who enter the United States unlawfully as compared to those who present themselves for inspection at a port of entry. As relevant here, Congress enacted what is now 8 U.S.C. § 1225, which requires the detention of any alien "who is an applicant for admission" and defines that term to encompass any "alien present in the United States who has not been admitted" following inspection by immigration authorities. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a), (b)(2)(A). The statute makes no exception for how far into the country the alien traveled or how long the alien managed to evade detection. Unless the Secretary exercises the narrow and discretionary parole authority, detention is the rule for aliens who have never been lawfully admitted.

There is no dispute that Petitioner is an "applicant for admission" under Section 1225(a), who entered the United States without inspection, three times in violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1325. Although, this Court continues to hold that illegals such as Petitioner, are not applicants for admission under § 1225, but rather should be treated under § 1226(a), and given bond hearings, because the Government has previously operated under a different understanding of the law, this Court must still apply the language of Section 1225(b)(2)(A) as written. Ultimately, based on the prior rulings from this court, the district court's interpretation is not only contrary to text, but it would reimpose the same perverse regime that IIRIRA was meant to eliminate—requiring the detention of aliens who present at a port of entry as the law requires, but authorizing the release of those aliens who enter the United States in violation of law. The Court should not endorse such a backwards outcome—particularly one that is so plainly subversive of congressional intent. For these same reasons, Petitioner's due process claims also fail because such is entirely derivative of the Petitioner's mistaken interpretation of §1225. Petitioner cannot show a likelihood of success on the

merits, and his motion should be denied.

A. Detention Under 8 U.S.C. § 1225

Section 1225 applies to "applicants for admission," who are defined as "alien[s] present in the United States who [have] not been admitted" or "who arrive[] in the United States." 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1). Applicants for admission "fall into one of two categories, those covered by § 1225(b)(1) and those covered by § 1225(b)(2)." *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281, 287 (2018). *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216, 218 (BIA 2025).

Section 1225(b)(1) applies to arriving aliens and "certain other" aliens "initially determined to be inadmissible due to fraud, misrepresentation, or lack of valid documentation." *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 287; 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1)(A)(i), (iii). These aliens are generally subject to expedited removal proceedings. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1)(A)(i). But if the alien "indicates an intention to apply for asylum . . . or a fear of persecution," immigration officers will refer the alien for a credible fear interview. *Id.* § 1225(b)(1)(A)(ii). An alien "with a credible fear of persecution" is "detained for further consideration of the application for asylum." *Id.* § 1225(b)(1)(B)(ii). If the alien does not indicate an intent to apply for asylum, express a fear of persecution, or is "found not to have such a fear," they are detained until removed from the United States. *Id.* §§ 1225(b)(1)(A)(i), (B)(iii)(IV).

Section 1225(b)(2) is "broader" and "serves as a catchall provision." *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 287. It "applies to all applicants for admission not covered by § 1225(b)(1)." *Id.* Under § 1225(b)(2), an alien "who is an applicant for admission" shall be detained for a removal proceeding "if the examining immigration officer determines that [the] alien seeking admission is not clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to be admitted." 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A); *see Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. at 220 ("[A]liens who are present in the United States without admission are applicants for admission as defined under section 235(b)(2)(A) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), and must be detained for the duration of their removal proceedings."); *Matter of Q. Li*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 66, 68 (BIA 2025) ("for aliens arriving in and seeking admission into the United States who are placed directly in full removal proceedings, section 235(b)(2)(A) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), mandates

detention 'until removal proceedings have concluded.'") (citing *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 299). However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has the sole discretionary authority to temporarily release on parole "any alien applying for admission to the United States" on a "case-by-case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit." *Id.* § 1182(d)(5)(A); *see Biden v. Texas*, 597 U.S. 785, 806 (2022).

B. Detention Under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a)

Section 1226 provides for arrest and detention "pending a decision on whether the alien is to be removed from the United States." 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a). Under § 1226(a), the government may detain an alien during his removal proceedings, release him on bond, or release him on conditional parole. By regulation, immigration officers can release aliens upon demonstrating that the alien "would not pose a danger to property or persons" and "is likely to appear for any future proceeding." 8 C.F.R. § 236.1(c)(8). An alien can also request a custody redetermination (i.e., a bond hearing) by an IJ at any time before a final order of removal is issued. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a); 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1(d)(1), 1236.1(d)(1), 1003.19.

At a custody redetermination, the IJ may continue detention or release the alien on bond or conditional parole. 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a); 8 C.F.R. § 1236.1(d)(1). IJs have broad discretion in deciding whether to release an alien on bond. *In Re Guerra*, 24 I. & N. Dec. 37, 39–40 (BIA 2006) (listing nine factors for IJs to consider). But regardless of the factors IJs consider, an alien "who presents a danger to persons or property should not be released during the pendency of removal proceedings." *Id.* at 38.

C. Review Before the Board of Immigration Appeals

The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) is an appellate body within the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) and possesses delegated authority from the Attorney General. 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.1(a)(1), (d)(1). The BIA is "charged with the review of those administrative adjudications under the [INA] that the Attorney General may by regulation assign to it," including IJ custody determinations. 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.1(d)(1), 236.1, 1236.1. The BIA not only resolves disputes before it, but is also directed to, "through precedent decisions, [] provide clear and uniform guidance to DHS, the immigration judges, and the

general public on the proper interpretation and administration of the [INA] and its implementing regulations." *Id.* § 1003.1(d)(1). Decisions rendered by the BIA are final, except for those reviewed by the Attorney General. 8 C.F.R. § 1003.1(d)(7).

Federal regulations provide that both the noncitizen and the government have a right to appeal an IJ's decision regarding a custody status or bond redetermination to the BIA. 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.19(f), 1003.38. Petitioner has not requested a bond hearing.

III. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Petitioner, Rafael Peña Trejo, an illegal alien, is a citizen of Mexico, who has a long-standing history of violating the immigration laws of the United States. On June 4, 1998, May 25, 2001, and May 29, 2001, United States Border Patrol (USBP) encountered and granted this Petitioner a voluntary return to Mexico three times. *See* I-213, attached as Exhibit A. Petitioner was arrested on January 12, 2026, during a targeted immigration enforcement in compliance with federal law and agency policy, pursuant to an administrative warrant. *Id.*; *see also* Exhibit B (pending). Petitioner was transferred to ICE custody on January 12, 2026, and he is currently detained pursuant to INA § 235, because he is an applicant for admission and is currently in removal proceedings. *See* Exhibit C. Petitioner has a hearing before an Immigration Judge scheduled for February 2, 2026. *Id.* Petitioner falls within the definition of an applicant for admission subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. 1225(b)(2).

IV. STANDARD OF REVIEW

Judicial review of immigration matters, including detention issues, is limited. *I.N.S. v. Aguirre-Aguirre*, 526 U.S. 415, 425 (1999); *Reno v. American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Comm.*, 525 U.S. 471, 489-492 (1999); *Miller v. Albright*, 523 U.S. 420, 434 n.11 (1998); *Fiallo v. Bell*, 430 U.S. 787, 792 (1977); *Reno v. Flores*, 507 U.S. 292, 305 (1993); *Hampton v. Mow Sun Wong*, 426 U.S. 88, 101 n.21 (1976) ("the power over aliens is of a political character and therefore subject only to narrow judicial review"). The Supreme Court has thus "underscore[d] the limited scope of inquiry into immigration legislation," and "has repeatedly emphasized that over no conceivable subject is the legislative power of Congress

more complete than it is over the admission of aliens." *Fiallo*, 430 U.S. at 792 (internal quotation omitted); *Matthews v. Diaz*, 426 U.S. 67, 79-82 (1976); *Galvan v. Press*, 347 U.S. 522, 531 (1954).

The plenary power of Congress and the Executive Branch over immigration necessarily encompasses immigration detention, because the authority to detain is elemental to the authority to deport, and because public safety is at stake. *See Shaughnessy*, 345 U.S. at 210 ("Courts have long recognized the power to expel or exclude aliens as a fundamental sovereign attribute exercised by the Government's political departments largely immune from judicial control."); *Carlson*, 342 U.S. at 538 ("Detention is necessarily a part of this deportation procedure."); *Wong Wing v. United States*, 163 U.S. 228, 235 (1896) ("Proceedings to exclude or expel would be vain if those accused could not be held in custody pending the inquiry into their true character, and while arrangements were being made for their deportation."); *Demore*, 538 U.S. at 531 ("Detention during removal proceedings is a constitutionally permissible part of that process.")

V. ARGUMENT

A. Petitioner Fails to Establish Entitlement to Interim Injunctive Relief

Petitioner's motion should be denied because he has not established that he is entitled to an interim injunctive relief. Petitioner cannot establish that he is likely to succeed on the underlying merits, there is no showing of irreparable harm, and the equities do not weigh in his favor. In general, the showing required for a temporary restraining order is the same as that required for a preliminary injunction. *See Stuhlbarg Int'l Sales Co. v. John D. Brush & Co.*, 240 F.3d 832, 839 (9th Cir. 2001). To prevail on a motion for a temporary restraining order, a plaintiff must "establish that he is likely to succeed on the merits, that he is likely to suffer irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief, that the balance of equities tips in his favor, and that an injunction is in the public interest." *Winter v. Nat. Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 555 U.S. 7, 20 (2008); s*ee Nken v. Holder*, 556 U.S. 418, 426 (2009). Plaintiff must demonstrate a "substantial case for relief on the merits." *Leiva-Perez v. Holder*, 640 F.3d 962, 967–68 (9th Cir. 2011). When "a plaintiff has failed to show

the likelihood of success on the merits, we need not consider the remaining three [*Winter* factors]." *Garcia v. Google, Inc.*, 786 F.3d 733, 740 (9th Cir. 2015).

The final two factors required for preliminary injunctive relief—balancing of the harm to the opposing party and the public interest—merge when the Government is the opposing party. *See Nken*, 556 U.S. at 435. The Supreme Court has specifically acknowledged that "[f]ew interests can be more compelling than a nation's need to ensure its own security." *Wayte v. United States*, 470 U.S. 598, 611 (1985); *see also United States v. Brignoni-Ponce*, 422 U.S. 873, 878-79 (1975); *New Motor Vehicle Bd. of California v. Orrin W. Fox Co.*, 434 U.S. 1345, 1351 (1977); *Blackie's House of Beef, Inc. v. Castillo*, 659 F.2d 1211, 1220–21 (D.C. Cir. 1981); *Maharaj v. Ashcroft*, 295 F.3d 963, 966 (9th Cir. 2002) (movant seeking injunctive relief "must show either (1) a probability of success on the merits and the possibility of irreparable harm, or (2) that serious legal questions are raised and the balance of hardships tips sharply in the moving party's favor." (quoting *Andreiu v. Ashcroft*, 253 F.3d 477, 483 (9th Cir. 2001))).

1. No Likelihood of Success on the Merits.

Likelihood of success on the merits is a threshold issue. *See Garcia*, 786 F.3d at 740. Petitioner cannot establish that he is likely to succeed on the underlying merits of his claims for alleged statutory and constitutional violations because he is subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225. When there is "an irreconcilable conflict in two legal provisions," then "the specific governs over the general." *Karczewski v. DCH Mission Valley LLC*, 862 F.3d 1006, 1015 (9th Cir. 2017). As Petitioner points out § 1226(a) applies to those arrested and detained pending a decision on removal. 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a); *see* ECF No. 2, pp. 2, 6. In contrast, § 1225 is narrower. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1225. It applies only to "applicants for admission"; that is, as relevant here, aliens present in the United States who have not be admitted. *See id.; see also Fla. v. United States*, 660 F. Supp. 3d 1239, 1275 (N.D. Fla. 2023). Because Petitioner falls within that category, the specific detention authority under § 1225 governs over the general authority found at § 1226(a).

/ / /

a. Petitioner is Lawfully Detained Pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2).

Petitioner's detention is lawful and statutorily authorized pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2), which requires mandatory detention throughout the entire removal proceedings. Pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), "in the case of an alien who is an applicant for admission, if the examining immigration officer determines that an alien seeking admission is not clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to be admitted, the alien shall be detained for a proceeding under section 1229a [removal proceedings]." 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). The Supreme Court has held that 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) is a mandatory detention statute and that aliens detained pursuant to that provision are not entitled to bond. *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 287 ("Both § 1225(b)(1) and § 1225(b)(2) authorize the detention of certain aliens.").

Contrary to Petitioner's arguments, he falls squarely within the ambit of Section 1225(b)(2)(A)'s mandatory detention requirement as Petitioner is an "applicant for admission" to the United States. If Petitioner does not think that he is an applicant for admission, then what is his status in the United States. As described above, an "applicant for admission" is an alien present in the United States who has not been admitted. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1). Petitioner's alien record clearly shows that he has not been admitted to the United States. Exhibit C. Furthermore, the record shows that he has entered and re-entered the United States illegally and without an inspection on two separate occasions. Petitioner has complete disregard for the immigration laws of the United States. Congress's broad language here is unequivocally intentional — an undocumented alien is to be "deemed for purposes of this chapter an applicant for admission." 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1). Regardless of Petitioner's characterization that "an applicant for admission" should only include aliens captured at the border or at a port of entry, he is "deemed" an applicant for admission based on Petitioner's failure to seek lawful admission to the United States before an immigration officer, which is undisputed. And because Petitioner has not demonstrated to an examining immigration officer that Petitioner is "clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to be admitted," Petitioner's detention is mandatory. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). Thus, the Petitioner is

properly detained pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), which mandates that Petitioner "shall be" detained.

The Supreme Court has confirmed an alien present in the country but never admitted is deemed "an applicant for admission" and that "detention must continue" "until removal proceedings have concluded" based on the "plain meaning" of 8 U.S.C. § 1225. *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 289 & 299. At issue in *Jennings* was the statutory interpretation. The Supreme Court reversed the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal's imposition of a six-month detention time limit into the statute. *Id.* at 297. The Court clarified there is no such limitation in the statute and reversed on these grounds, remanding the constitutional Due Process claims for initial consideration before the lower court. *Id.* But under the words of the statute, as explained by the Supreme Court, 8 U.S.C. § 1225 includes aliens like the Petitioner who are present but have not been admitted and they shall be detained pending their removal proceedings. Specifically, the Supreme Court declared, "an alien who 'arrives in the United States,' *or* 'is present' in this country but 'has not been admitted,' is treated as 'an applicant for admission.'" *Id.* at 287 (emphasis on "or" added). In doing so, the Court explained both aliens captured at the border and those illegally residing within the United States would fall under § 1225. This would include Petitioner as an alien who is present in the country without being admitted.

And now, the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) has confirmed the application of § 1225 in a published formal decision: "Based on the plain language of section 235(b)(2)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) (2018), Immigration Judges lack authority to hear bond requests or to grant bond to aliens who are present in the United States without admission." *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216. Indeed, §1225 applies to aliens who are present in the country *even for years* and who have not been admitted. *See Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. at 226 ("the statutory text of the INA . . . is instead clear and explicit in requiring mandatory detention of all aliens who are applicants for admission, without regard to how many years the alien has been residing in the United States without lawful status." (citing 8 U.S.C. §1225)). The BIA found § 1225

clear and unambiguous as explained above. Thus, because the alien was present in the United States (regardless of how long) and because he was never admitted, he shall be detained during his removal proceedings. *See id.* at 228. In doing so, the BIA rejected the same arguments raised by Petitioner and by other similar petitioners in this District. For example, the BIA rejected the "legal conundrum" postulated by the alien that while he may be an applicant for admission under the statute, he is somehow not actually "seeking admission." *Id.* at 221. The BIA explained that such a leap failed to make sense and violated the plain meaning of the statute. *See id.* Next, the BIA rejected the alien's argument that the mandatory detention scheme under § 1225 rendered the recent amendment to § 1226 under the Laken Riley Act superfluous. *Id.* The BIA explained, "nothing in the statutory text of section 236(c), including the text of the amendments made by the Laken Riley Act, purports to alter or undermine the provisions of section 235(b)(2)(A) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), requiring that aliens who fall within the definition of the statute 'shall be detained for [removal proceedings].'" *Id.* at 222. The BIA explained further that any redundancy between the two statutes does not give license to "rewrite or eviscerate" one of the statutes. *See id.* (quoting *Barton v. Barr*, 590 U.S. 222, 239 (2020)). Also, the BIA reasoned that it matters not that the alien was initially served with a warrant listing 8 U.S.C. § 122**6** and informing him of his ability to seek bond — an Immigration Court cannot bestow jurisdiction upon itself with that initial paperwork when said jurisdiction has been specifically revoked by Congress in § 1225. *See id.* at 226-27 (explaining "the mere issuance of an arrest warrant does not endow an Immigration Judge with authority to set bond for an alien who falls under section 235(b)(2)(A) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A).") The BIA further pointed out, "Our acknowledgement that aliens detained under section 236(a) may be eligible for discretionary release on bond does not mean that *all* aliens detained while in the United States with a warrant of arrest are detained under section 236(a) and entitled to a bond hearing before the Immigration Judge, regardless of whether they are applicants for admission under section 235(b)(2)(A) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A)." *Id.* at 227 (quotations omitted). Thus, the BIA rejected this and every argument raised by the alien to

find § 1225 applied to him despite residing in the country for years. *Id.* The BIA mandate is also sweeping. The *Hurtado* decision was unanimous, conducted by a three-appellate judge panel. *See id. generally.* It is binding on all immigration judges in the United States. 8 C.F.R. § 1003.1(g)(1) ("[D]ecisions of the Board and decisions of the Attorney General are binding on all officers and employees of DHS or immigration judges in the administration of the immigration laws of the United States."). And because the decision was published, a majority of the entire Board must have voted to publish it, which establishes the decision "to serve as precedent[] in all proceedings involving the same issue or issues." *See* 8 C.F.R. § 1003.1(g)(2)-(3). Indeed, this is the law of the land in immigration court today. *See* also 8 C.F.R. § 1003.1(d)(1) (explaining "the Board, through precedent decisions, shall provide clear and uniform guidance to DHS, the immigration judges, and the general public on the proper interpretation and administration of the Act and its implementing regulations."). And in the Board's own words, *Hurtado* is a "precedential opinion." *Id.* at 216.

Here, the Petitioner has not requested a bond hearing before an IJ, thus he has not exhausted his administrative remedies. He does have a hearing before an IJ on February 2, 2026. Exhibit C. Pursuant to the statutory and Supreme Court case law, Petitioner's temporary detention is lawful while his removal proceedings are pending. Any argument by Petitioner that his detention exceeds statutory authority is clearly invalid and should be rejected. The United States respectfully maintains §1225 straightforwardly applies to Petitioner, especially considering *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 287 (explaining "an alien who "arrives in the United States," or "is present" in this country but "has not been admitted," is treated as "an applicant for admission." § 1225(a)(1)). Petitioner is properly detained under § 1225 and cannot show an entitlement to relief and/or likelihood of success on the merits.

2. Irreparable Harm Has Not Been Shown.

To prevail on their request for interim injunctive relief, Petitioner must demonstrate "immediate threatened injury." *Caribbean Marine Servs. Co. v. Baldrige*, 844 F.2d 668, 674 (9th Cir. 1988) (citing *Los Angeles Mem'l Coliseum Comm'n v. Nat'l Football League*, 634 F.2d 1197, 1201 (9th Cir. 1980)). Merely showing a "possibility" of irreparable harm is insufficient. *See*

Winter, 555 U.S. at 22. And as discussed above, detention alone is not an irreparable injury. *See Reyes v. Wolf*, No. C20-0377-JLR, 2021 WL 662659, at *3 (W.D. Wash. Feb. 19, 2021), *aff'd sub nom. Diaz Reyes v. Mayorkas*, No. 21-35142, 2021 WL 3082403 (9th Cir. July 21, 2021) ("[C]ivil detention after the denial of a bond hearing [does not] constitute[] irreparable harm such that prudential exhaustion should be waived."). Further, "[i]ssuing a preliminary injunction based only on a possibility of irreparable harm is inconsistent with [the Supreme Court's] characterization of injunctive relief as an extraordinary remedy that may only be awarded upon a clear showing that the plaintiff is entitled to such relief." *Winter*, 555 U.S. at 22. Here, as explained above, because Petitioners' alleged harm "is essentially inherent in detention, the Court cannot weigh this strongly in favor of" Petitioners. *Lopez Reyes v. Bonnar*, No. 18-CV-07429-SK, 2018 WL 7474861, at *10 (N.D. Cal. Dec. 24, 2018).

3. Balance of Equities Does Not Tip in Petitioner's Favor.

It is well settled that the public interest in enforcement of the United States' immigration laws is significant. *See, e.g.*, *United States v. Martinez-Fuerte*, 428 U.S. 543, 551-58 (1976); *Blackie's House of Beef, Inc.*, 659 F.2d at 1221 ("The Supreme Court has recognized that the public interest in enforcement of the immigration laws is significant.") (citing cases); *see also Nken*, 556 U.S. at 435 ("There is always a public interest in prompt execution of removal orders: The continued presence of an alien lawfully deemed removable undermines the streamlined removal proceedings IIRIRA established and permits and prolongs a continuing violation of United States law.") (internal quotation omitted). The BIA also has an "institutional interest" to protect its "administrative agency authority." *See McCarthy v. Madigan*, 503 U.S. 140, 145, 146 (1992) *superseded by statute as recognized in Porter v. Nussle*, 534 U.S. 516 (2002). "Exhaustion is generally required as a matter of preventing premature interference with agency processes, so that the agency may function efficiently and so that it may have an opportunity to correct its own errors, to afford the parties and the courts the benefit of its experience and expertise, and to compile a record which is adequate for judicial review." *Glob. Rescue Jets, LLC v. Kaiser Found. Health Plan, Inc.*, 30 F.4th 905, 913 (9th Cir. 2022) (quoting *Weinberger v. Salfi*, 422 U.S. 749, 765 (1975)). Indeed, "agencies, not

the courts, ought to have primary responsibility for the programs that Congress has charged them to administer." *McCarthy*, 503 U.S. at 145. Moreover, "[u]ltimately the balance of the relative equities 'may depend to a large extent upon the determination of the [movant's] prospects of success.'" *Tiznado-Reyna v. Kane*, Case No. CV 12-1159-PHX-SRB (SPL), 2012 WL 12882387, at * 4 (D. Ariz. Dec. 13, 2012) (quoting *Hilton v. Braunskill*, 481 U.S. 770, 778 (1987)). Here, as explained above, Petitioner cannot succeed on the merits of his claims. The balancing of equities and the public interest weigh heavily against granting Petitioner's equitable relief.

a. Petitioner Has Failed to Exhaust Administrative Remedies

Similarly, requiring exhaustion here would be consistent with Congressional intent to have claims, such as Petitioner's, subject to the channeling provisions of § 1252(b)(9) that provide for appeal to the BIA and then, if unsuccessful, the Ninth Circuit. "Exhaustion can be either statutorily or judicially required." *Acevedo-Carranza v. Ashcroft*, 371 F.3d 539, 541 (9th Cir. 2004). "If exhaustion is statutory, it may be a mandatory requirement that is jurisdictional." *Id.* (citing *El Rescate Legal Servs., Inc. v. Exec. Off. of Immigr. Rev.*, 959 F.2d 742, 747 (9th Cir. 1991)). "If, however, exhaustion is a prudential requirement, a court has discretion to waive the requirement." *Id.* (citing *Stratman v. Watt*, 656 F.2d 1321, 1325–26 (9th Cir. 1981)). Here, Petitioner has not requested a bond hearing, but filed his motion for TRO before the Court, attempting to bypass the administrative scheme which is contrary to Congressional intent.

"District Courts are authorized by 28 U.S.C § 2241 to consider petitions for habeas corpus." *Castro–Cortez v. INS*, 239 F.3d 1037, 1047 (9th Cir. 2001). "That section does not specifically require petitioners to exhaust direct appeals before filing petitions for habeas corpus." *Id.* That said, the Ninth Circuit "require[s], as a prudential matter, that habeas petitioners exhaust available judicial and administrative remedies before seeking relief under § 2241." *Id.* Specifically, "courts may require prudential exhaustion if (1) agency expertise makes agency consideration necessary to generate a proper record and reach a proper decision; (2) relaxation of the requirement would encourage the deliberate bypass of the

administrative scheme; and (3) administrative review is likely to allow the agency to correct its own mistakes and to preclude the need for judicial review." *Puga v. Chertoff*, 488 F.3d 812, 815 (9th Cir. 2007) (internal quotation marks omitted).

"When a petitioner does not exhaust administrative remedies, a district court ordinarily should either dismiss the petition without prejudice or stay the proceedings until the petitioner has exhausted remedies, unless exhaustion is excused." *Leonardo v. Crawford*, 646 F.3d 1157, 1160 (9th Cir. 2011); *see also Alvarado v. Holder*, 759 F.3d 1121, 1127 n.5 (9th Cir. 2014) (issue exhaustion is a jurisdictional requirement); *Tijani v. Holder*, 628 F.3d 1071, 1080 (9th Cir. 2010) (no jurisdiction to review legal claims not presented in the petitioner's administrative proceedings before the BIA). Moreover, a "petitioner cannot obtain review of procedural errors in the administrative process that were not raised before the agency merely by alleging that every such error violates due process." *Vargas v. U.S. Dep't of Immigr. & Naturalization*, 831 F.2d 906, 908 (9th Cir. 1987); *see also Sola v. Holder*, 720 F.3d 1134, 1135–36 (9th Cir. 2013) (declining to address a due process argument that was not raised below because it could have been addressed by the agency).

Here, exhaustion is warranted because agency expertise is required. First, an IJ must determine if this Petitioner can be released on a bond after the IJ conducts an analysis as to whether this Petitioner is at flight risk and/or a danger to the community. This has not happened in this case. Instead, Petitioner wants to be released while completely circumventing the administrative process and immigration laws. "[T]he BIA is the subject-matter expert in immigration bond decisions." *Aden v. Nielsen*, No. C18-1441RSL, 2019 WL 5802013, at *2 (W.D. Wash. Nov. 7, 2019). The BIA is well-positioned to assess how agency practice affects the interplay between 8 U.S.C. §§ 1225 and 1226. *See Delgado v. Sessions*, No. C17-1031-RSL-JPD, 2017 WL 4776340, at *2 (W.D. Wash. Sept. 15, 2017) (noting a denial of bond to an immigration detainee was "a question well suited for agency expertise"); *Matter of M-S-*, 27 I. & N. Dec. 509, 515–18 (2019) (addressing interplay of §§ 1225(b)(1) and 1226). *But see Vasquez-Rodriguez v. Garland*, 7 F.4th 888, 896–97 (9th Cir. 2021); *Garcia v. Noem*, 803 F. Supp. 3d 1064, 1073–1074 (S.D. Cal. 2025).

Waiving exhaustion would also "encourage other detainees to bypass the BIA and directly appeal their no-bond determinations from the IJ to federal district court." *Aden*, 2019 WL 5802013, at *2. Individuals, like Petitioner, would have little incentive to seek relief before the BIA if this Court permits review here. And allowing a skip-the-BIA-and-go-straight-to-federal-court strategy would needlessly increase the burden on district courts. *See Bd. of Tr. of Constr. Laborers' Pension Trust for S. Calif. v. M.M. Sundt Constr. Co.*, 37 F.3d 1419, 1420 (9th Cir. 1994) ("Judicial economy is an important purpose of exhaustion requirements."); *see also Santos-Zacaria v. Garland*, 598 U.S. 411, 418 (2023) (noting "exhaustion promotes efficiency"). If the IJs erred as Petitioner alleges or may eventually allege, this Court should allow the administrative process to correct itself. *See id.*

Moreover, detention alone is not an irreparable injury. Discretion to waive exhaustion "is not unfettered." *Laing v. Ashcroft*, 370 F.3d 994, 998 (9th Cir. 2004). Petitioners bear the burden to show that an exception to the exhaustion requirement applies. *Leonardo*, 646 F.3d at 1161; *Aden*, 2019 WL 5802013, at *3. "[C]ivil detention after the denial of a bond hearing [does not] constitute[] irreparable harm such that prudential exhaustion should be waived." *Reyes*, 2021 WL 662659, at *3.

Because Petitioner has not exhausted his administrative remedies, this matter should be dismissed or stayed.

b. Request for EAJA Fees Should be Denied.

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. I.N.S.*, 502 U.S. 129 (1991). His 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 is substantially justified because other courts have found the arguments presented herein 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 to this Petitioner.

As described above, 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 v. Trump*, 802 F. Supp. 3d 1132 (D. Neb. 2025); *Chavez v. Noem*, 801 F. Supp. 3d 1133 (S.D. Cal. 2025). 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 United States' position in this case is substantially justified, Petitioner's request for attorney's fees under EAJA cannot prevail.

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VI. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Federal Respondents respectfully request that the Court deny the Petitioner's Motion for Preliminary Injunction.

Respectfully submitted this 2nd day of February 2026.

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