

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA**

**Case No.** \_\_\_\_\_

**SAMUEL ELISEO DIAZ-MURCIA,**

Petitioner,

**v.**

**KELEI WALKER**, in her official capacity as  
Field Office Director of U.S. Immigration and  
Customs Enforcement Miami Field Office;

**KRISTI NOEM**, in her official capacity as  
the Secretary of the U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security;

**PAMELA BONDI**, in her official capacity as  
Acting Attorney General of the United States.

Respondents.

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**PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS**

The Petitioner, Samuel Eliseo Diaz-Murcia (“Petitioner”), submits this petition for writ of habeas corpus and related relief and alleges as follows:

1. Petitioner is a native and citizen of El Salvador, born on March 7, 2006. He entered the United States on or about July 7, 2021, at or near Hidalgo, Texas, without inspection, while he was fifteen years old, and without a parent or legal guardian. Upon entry, Petitioner was determined by the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) to be an unaccompanied minor and was placed in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (“ORR”). Petitioner has remained in the United States since that time.

2. On December 16, 2022, while his unaccompanied minor status governed jurisdiction over his protection claim, Petitioner filed a Form I-589 Application for Asylum and

for Withholding of Removal with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”). That application remains pending and has never been adjudicated on the merits. Petitioner filed his asylum application prior to any detention in an adult facility.

3. Petitioner is currently in removal proceedings before the Immigration Court. On January 25, 2026, the Immigration Judge issued an order pretermittting Petitioner’s applications for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture based on an asserted application of the Ecuador Asylum Cooperative Agreement (“ACA”). The Immigration Judge further scheduled the matter for consideration of voluntary departure. Petitioner has timely challenged that order through appropriate administrative mechanisms, including a motion to reconsider, on the grounds that the Court lacked jurisdiction and relied on legally and factually erroneous findings. Petitioner is not subject to 8 U.S.C. §1231 due to the lack of an administratively final order of removal, but rather 8 U.S.C. §1226(a), which applies to persons detained “pending a decision on whether the alien is to be removed.”

4. Petitioner is presently detained in an adult immigration detention facility while these proceedings remain ongoing. His detention followed the filing of his asylum application and occurred notwithstanding the fact that USCIS retains exclusive initial jurisdiction over that application pursuant to the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and the settlement agreement in *J.O.P. v. DHS*, No. 19-cv-01944 (D. Md.). Petitioner’s current detention places him at imminent risk of removal despite the unresolved jurisdictional defects in his case.

5. Petitioner remains detained at Broward Transitional Center (“BTC”) where he has been incarcerated for approximately four months. As further explained *infra*, Respondents lack the authority to arrest and detain him without a bond hearing under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), its implementing regulations, and the Constitution.

6. Petitioner sought a bond redetermination hearing on January 12, 2026 before an immigration judge (IJ), but the IJ denied bond stating that he is not entitled to an individualized hearing. The IJ denied by applying an erroneous agency decision. *See Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216 (B.I.A. 2025), Petitioner’s detention on this basis 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), which allows for release on conditional parole or bond. That statute expressly applies to people who—like Petitioner—are charged as inadmissible for having entered the United States without inspection.

7. Respondents’ erroneous legal interpretation is plainly contrary to the statutory framework governing immigrant detention and contrary to decades of agency practice applying § 1226(a) to people like Petitioner. Petitioner seeks a writ of habeas corpus requiring that she be released unless Respondents provide a bond hearing under § 1226(a) within fourteen (14) days.

### **CUSTODY**

8. Petitioner is currently in the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) at BTC located at 3900 N Powerline Rd., Pompano Beach, Florida. He is therefore in “‘custody’ of [the DHS] within the meaning of the habeas corpus statute.” *Jones v. Cunningham*, 371 U.S. 236, 243 (1963).

### **JURISDICTION & VENUE**

9. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction under Art. I § 9, cl. 2 of the U.S. Constitution (the Suspension Clause), 28 U.S.C. § 2241 (habeas corpus), 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question jurisdiction); and 28 U.S.C. § 2201 (Declaratory Judgment Act).

10. Federal district courts have jurisdiction to hear habeas claims by non-citizens challenging the lawfulness of their detention. *See, e.g., Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 687 (2001).

11. Venue is proper in this district and division pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241(c)(3) and 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2) and (e)(1) because Petitioner is currently detained in this district and division and events or omissions giving rise to this action occurred in this district and division.

### **PARTIES**

12. Petitioner, Samuel Eliseo Diaz-Murcia, is a native and citizen of El Salvador who is currently detained at BTC in Pompano Beach, Florida.

13. Respondent Kelei Walker is the Field Office Director for the ICE Miami Field Office. In that capacity, she is charged with overseeing BTC, which is owned by ICE and operated by a contractor, and has the authority to make custody determinations regarding individuals detained there. Therefore, Respondent Walker is the immediate custodian of Petitioner. She is sued in his official capacity.

14. Respondent Kristi Noem is the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). She supervises ICE, an agency within DHS that is responsible for the administration and enforcement of immigration laws, and she has supervisory responsibility for and authority over the detention and removal of non-citizens throughout the United States. Secretary Noem is the ultimate legal custodian of Petitioner. Respondent Noem is sued in her official capacity.

15. Respondent Pamela Bondi is the Attorney General of the United States. As the Attorney General, she oversees the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), including all immigration judges (IJs) and the BIA. Respondent Bondi is sued in her official capacity.

## LEGAL BACKGROUND

### **A. Detention During Removal Proceedings**

16. Section 1229a of Title 8 of the U.S. Code (Section 240 of the INA) describes the primary process through which the government seek to remove non-citizens from the United States. It specifies that “[u]nless otherwise specified in this chapter, a proceeding under this section shall be the sole and exclusive procedure for determining whether an alien may be . . . removed from the United States.” 8 U.S.C. § 1229a(a)(3).

17. To initiate removal proceedings against a non-citizen under Section 1229a, the Government must issue the non-citizen an NTA. 8 U.S.C. § 1229(a)(1). Most non-citizens go through removal proceedings from outside detention. But ICE is increasingly detaining non-citizens during their removal proceedings.

18. Section 1226 of Title 8 of the U.S. Code (Section 236 of the INA) is the default provision that governs the arrest and detention of non-citizens pending removal proceedings. It states that “on a warrant issued by the Attorney General,<sup>1</sup> a[] [non-citizen] may be arrested and detained pending a decision on whether the [non-citizen] is to be removed from the United States” 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a). Non-citizens arrested upon a warrant and in ongoing removal proceedings are eligible to seek bond from an IJ. *Id.* § 1226(a)(2).

19. A separate provision governs the detention of people who seek admission to the United States at the border. It states that “in the case of a [non-citizen] who is an applicant for admission, if the examining immigration officer determines that a [non-citizen] seeking admission is not clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to be admitted, the non-citizen shall be detained for a

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<sup>1</sup> In 2003, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) within the Department of Justice (DOJ) became what is now ICE, which is housed within DHS. Therefore, some statutory references to the “Attorney General,” like this one, now refer to the Secretary of DHS.

proceeding under section 1229a of this title.” 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). IJs do not have jurisdiction to grant bond for such “applicant[s] for admission,” though DHS retains the discretion to release such non-citizens on a specific type of parole “for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.” 8 U.S.C. § 1182(d)(5)(A).

20. No exhaustion is statutorily required for the petitioner’s habeas claims because “Section 2241 itself does not impose an exhaustion requirement,” *Santiago-Lugo v. Warden*, 785 F.3d 467, 474 (CA11 2015).

21. Regardless, “[w]here Congress does not say there is a jurisdictional bar, there is none.” *Santiago-Lugo v. Warden*, 785 F.3d 467, 473 (11th Cir. 2015). The fact that it did not limit courts’ subject matter jurisdiction to decide unexhausted § 2241 claims compels the conclusion that any failure of [the respondent] to exhaust administrative remedies is not a jurisdictional defect.” *Id.* at 474.


22. In the absence of a statutorily mandated exhaustion requirement, whether to apply a common law exhaustion requirement is a decision that rests soundly within the broad discretion of district courts. *See J.N.C.G. v. Warden, Stewart Detention Ctr.*, No. 4:20-CV-62-MSH, 2020 WL 5046870, at \*3 (M.D. Ga. Aug. 26, 2020) (citing *McCarthy v. Madigan*, 503 U.S. 140, 144 (1992)); *see also Richardson v. Reno*, 162 F.3d 1338, 1374 (11th Cir. 1998); *Yahweh v. U.S. Parole Comm’n*, 158 F. Supp. 2d 1332, 1341 (S.D. Fla. 2001).

23. Here, there is no reason to require additional exhaustion of administrative remedies, as Petitioner has no meaningful alternative to habeas relief, and has already requested bond from the immigration court. *Boz v. United States*, 248 F.3d 1299, 1300 (11th Cir. 2001) (“[A] petitioner need not exhaust their administrative remedies where the administrative remedy will not provide relief commensurate with the claim.”); *Linfors v. United States*, 673 F.2d 332, 334 (11th Cir. 1982)

("[E]xhaustion is not required where no genuine opportunity for adequate relief exists . . . or an administrative appeal would be futile[.]"). In light of the BIA's recent decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216 (B.I.A. 2025), exhaustion would be futile because the outcome of the administrative process can be reasonably anticipated and would not constitute an adequate remedy.

24. Accordingly, 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).

### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

25. Petitioner is a native and citizen of El Salvador, born on  See Exh. 1, Passport. He entered the United States on or about July 7, 2021, at or near Hidalgo, Texas, without inspection, while he was fifteen years old and without a parent or legal guardian. See Exh. 2, Notice to Appear. Upon entry, the DHS determined that Petitioner was an unaccompanied minor and placed him in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement ("ORR"). See Exh. 3, Verification of Release from ORR.

26. On December 16, 2022, while his unaccompanied minor status governed jurisdiction over his protection claim, Petitioner filed a Form I-589 Application for Asylum and for Withholding of Removal with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS"). See Exh. 4, USCIS Receipt and Biometrics Notices. That application remains pending and has never been adjudicated on the merits. Petitioner filed his asylum application prior to any detention in an adult facility. *Id.*

27. Petitioner has resided continuously in the United States since his entry in 2021 and has demonstrated stability and compliance with the law. He has no criminal history involving violence, controlled substances, weapons, or any conduct posing a danger to the community. His

only interaction with the criminal legal system was a May 2025 charge in Martin County, Florida, for Driving Without a Valid License under Fla. Stat. § 322.03, which was nolle prossed and resulted in no conviction. See Exh. 5, Traffic Case Records. Petitioner has no history of absconding or failing to comply with legal requirements and presents no risk of flight.

28. In support of his motion for bond, Petitioner submitted substantial evidence of his family, employment, and community ties in the United States, including letters of support from community members. See Exh. 6, Letters of Support.

29. Petitioner is currently in removal proceedings before the Immigration Court. On January 12, 2026, an Immigration Judge denied Petitioner's request for bond, concluding that the Court lacked authority to conduct a bond hearing or grant bond under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), relying on *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025). See Exh. 7, Immigration Judge Bond Denial Order.

30. On January 25, 2026, an Immigration Judge issued an order preterminating Petitioner's applications for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture based on an asserted application of the Ecuador Asylum Cooperative Agreement ("ACA"). See Exh. 8, Immigration Judge Pretermission Order. The Immigration Judge further scheduled the matter for consideration of voluntary departure. Petitioner has challenged that order through appropriate administrative mechanisms on the grounds that the Immigration Court lacked jurisdiction and relied on legally and factually erroneous findings. See Exh. 9, Motion to Vacate.

31. Petitioner is presently detained in an adult immigration detention facility, while his immigration proceedings remain ongoing. His detention occurred after he filed his asylum application with USCIS and notwithstanding that USCIS retains exclusive initial jurisdiction over

that application pursuant to the Trafficking TVPRA and the settlement agreement in *J.O.P. v. DHS*, No. 19-cv-01944 (D. Md.).

32. In violation of his statutory and due process rights, Petitioner remains detained at BTC, in Pompano Beach, Florida, and is in removal proceedings, as of the date of this petition.

### ARGUMENT

#### **A. Petitioner's Continued Detention Is Unlawful Because He Is Not Subject to Mandatory Detention Under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)**

33. Petitioner contends that Respondents have unlawfully subjected him to mandatory detention pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2), despite the fact that he was apprehended inside the United States after having resided here for several years. As a result, Respondents have deprived him of his liberty without due process, contrary to the Fifth Amendment and the INA.

34. At the Petitioner's bond hearing in the Immigration Court, DHS asserted that Petitioner is properly detained under § 1225(b)(2) and that DHS therefore lacks authority to release him on bond. The Immigration Judge found that because § 1225(b)(2) mandates detention until the conclusion of removal proceedings, Petitioner's custody is lawful and the Court lacks jurisdiction to review it. Petitioner disputes these contentions and submits that his detention falls squarely within the scope of § 1226(a), which provides for discretionary detention and permits release on bond or conditional parole pending completion of removal proceedings.

35. The IJ's January 25, 2026 Order relies on the BIA decision *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025), which district courts across the country have roundly rejected. *See e.g., Barrera v. Tindall*, No. 3 :25-CV-541-RGJ, 2025 WL 2690565 (W.D. Ky. Sept. 19, 2025); *Zumba v. Bondi*, No. 25-CV-14626-KSH-, 2025 WL 2753496 (D.N.J. Sept. 26, 2025); *Lopez-Arevelo v. Ripa*, No. EP-25-CV-337-KC, 2025 WL 2691828 (W.D. Tex. Sept. 22, 2025); *Lopez-Campos*, No. 2:25-CV12486, 2025 WL 2496379 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025); *Valencia*

*Zapata v. Kaiser*, No. 25-CV07492-RFL, 2025 WL 2741654 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 26, 2025). This Court should also decline to follow *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, whose interpretation of § 1225 is at odds with the text of § 1225 and § 1226, is inconsistent with earlier BIA decisions, and renders superfluous the recent Laken Riley Act amendments to § 1226(c).

36. Specifically, the Chief United States District Judge Cecilia M. Altonaga, recently issued a decision in *Alvarez Puga*, rejecting the Respondents' reliance on *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*.

In that decision, the Court explained:

“Respondents’ reliance on the BIA’s decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado* — rejecting the argument that a noncitizen who entered the United States without inspection and has resided here for years is not ‘seeking admission’ under section 1225(b)(2)(A) — is also misplaced. The Court need not defer to the BIA’s interpretation of law simply because the statute is ambiguous. *See Loper Bright Enters. v. Raimondo*, 603 U.S. 369, 413 (2024) (“[C]ourts need not and under the APA may not defer to an agency interpretation of the law simply because a statute is ambiguous.” (alteration added)). As explained, the statutory text, context, and scheme of section 1225 do not support a finding that a noncitizen is ‘seeking admission’ when he never sought to do so. Additionally, numerous courts that have examined the interpretation of section 1225 articulated by Respondents — particularly following the BIA’s decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado* — have rejected their construction and adopted Petitioner’s. . . . For these reasons, the Court finds that section 1226(a) and its implementing regulations govern Petitioner’s detention, not section 1225(b)(2)(A). Petitioner is entitled to an individualized bond hearing as a detainee under section 1226(a).”

*See Alvarez Puga v. Assistant Field Office Director, Krome North Service Processing Center et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-24535 (S.D. Fla. Oct. 15, 2025) at \*10.

37. This case turns on the statutory distinction between § 1226(a) and § 1225(b)(2) of the INA. Section 1226(a) governs the arrest and detention of noncitizens already present in the United States pending removal proceedings, while § 1225(b)(2) governs the detention of noncitizens arriving at the border or ports of entry. In enacting these provisions, Congress expressly recognized the greater due process rights of noncitizens residing within the United States as compared to those of “arriving” noncitizens. *See H.R. REP. 104-469*, pt. 1, at 163–66 (“an alien

present in the U.S. has a constitutional liberty interest to remain in the U.S.”), citing *Knauff v. Shaughnessy*, 338 U.S. 537 (1950).

38. Consistent with this statutory framework, immigration agencies and courts have long applied § 1226(a)—not § 1225(b)(2)—to noncitizens apprehended inside the United States who were not seeking admission at the border. *See Maldonado v. Feely*, No. 25-cv-01542-RFB-EJY (D. Nev. Sept. 17, 2025) (“Despite being applicants for admission, aliens who are present without admission or parole will be eligible for bond and bond redetermination... inadmissible aliens, except for arriving aliens, have available to them bond redetermination hearings before an immigration judge, while arriving aliens do not.”) (citing *Inspection and Expedited Removal of Aliens*, 62 Fed. Reg. 10312, 10323 (Mar. 6, 1997)).

39. Nonetheless, on July 8, 2025, DHS issued a notice instructing ICE officers to detain all noncitizens “who have not been admitted” under § 1225(b)(2), regardless of where they were apprehended. *See ICE Memo: Interim Guidance Regarding Detention Authority for Applications for Admission*, AILA Doc. No. 25071607 (July 8, 2025). The Notice purports to eliminate bond eligibility for such individuals, directing that they “may not be released from ICE custody except by INA § 212(d)(5) parole.”

40. This expansive interpretation contradicts the statutory text, legislative history, and consistent judicial authority in multiple circuits. *See, e.g., Merino v. Noem*, No. 25-cv-23845 (S.D. Fla. Oct. 15, 2025), *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-CV-12486, 2025 WL 2496379 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025); *Rodriguez v. Bostock*, 779 F. Supp. 3d 1239 (W.D. Wash. 2025); *Gomes v. Hyde*, No. 1:25-cv-11571-JEK, 2025 WL 1869299 (D. Mass. July 7, 2025); *Bautista v. Santacruz*, No. 5:25-cv-01873-SSS-BFM (C.D. Cal. July 28, 2025); *Rosado v. Figueroa*, No. 2:25-cv-02157-DLR, 2025 WL 2337099 (D. Ariz. Aug. 11, 2025). Each of these courts rejected DHS’s position

and held that noncitizens residing in the United States when taken into custody are detained under § 1226(a) and therefore entitled to a bond hearing.

41. Petitioner was encountered near the border in 2021 and was subsequently transferred to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement as an unaccompanied child. He was later released into the United States and has resided here continuously since that time. Given his release from custody and placement into regular removal proceedings, his continued detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b) is unlawful. Petitioner is not subject to expedited removal, nor is he presently seeking admission at a port of entry. Accordingly, his custody is governed by 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), which entitles him to an individualized bond hearing. The government's reliance on § 1225(b) to deny bond violates the Immigration and Nationality Act and Petitioner's due process.

**B. Petitioner's Continued Detention Violates His Substantive and Procedural Due Process Rights**

42. The Fifth Amendment guarantees that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. U.S. CONST. amend. V. This protection extends to all persons within the United States—citizens and noncitizens alike—regardless of immigration status. *See Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 693 (2001). Because Petitioner has been detained for an extended period without a meaningful opportunity to seek release, his detention offends both procedural and substantive due process.

43. Civil immigration detention must always “bear[] a reasonable relation to the purpose for which the individual was committed.” *Demore v. Kim*, 538 U.S. 510, 527 (2003) (citing *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 690). The Supreme Court has made clear that there are only two plausible purposes for immigration detention: ensuring a non-citizen's appearance at his removal proceedings and/or preventing danger to the community. *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 690. Indeed, where civil detention “is of potentially *indefinite* duration,” courts have “also demanded that the

dangerousness rationale be accompanied by some other special circumstance.” *Id.* If immigration detention is not reasonably related to one of these purposes, it is essentially punitive and therefore violative of the Due Process Clause. *See id.*

44. To determine whether the Government’s procedures satisfy procedural due process, courts apply the three-part balancing test from *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319 (1976). *See Rodriguez Diaz v. Garland*, 53 F.4th 1189, 1206 (9th Cir. 2022). Under *Mathews*, courts consider: (1) the private interest affected by the government action; (2) the risk of erroneous deprivation of that interest through existing procedures and the probable value of additional safeguards; and (3) the government’s interest, including administrative or fiscal burdens of additional process. *Mathews*, 424 U.S. at 335. Each of these factors strongly favors Petitioner.

45. First, the Petitioner’s liberty interest is undoubtedly substantial. Freedom from physical constraint is “the most elemental of liberty interests.” *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507, 525 (2004). Petitioner has been detained for three months without any individualized assessment of flight risk or danger despite his long residence in the United States, family ties, and lack of any disqualifying criminal record because the IJ refused to consider those factors, finding he lacked jurisdiction to set bond.

46. Second, the risk of erroneous deprivation is extreme. The IJ’s refusal to even consider bond, based on DHS’s position that Petitioner is subject to “mandatory detention” under §1225(b)(2), deprived him of the only procedural mechanism designed to test the necessity of his continued confinement. This result effectively transformed the bond hearing into an empty formality, denying Petitioner a meaningful opportunity to contest his detention. Courts have consistently held that procedures which categorically foreclose individualized review of detention violate due process. *See Günaydin v. Trump*, No. 25-cv-1151, 2025 WL 1459154 (D. Minn. May

21, 2025) (describing DHS’s unilateral detention authority as creating “not just a risk, but a likelihood” of erroneous deprivation).

47. Third, the Government’s interests are adequately protected by the individualized bond determination procedure already contemplated by §1226(a). As the Ninth Circuit recognized in *Hernandez v. Sessions*, 872 F.3d 976, 994 (9th Cir. 2017), “the government has no legitimate interest in detaining individuals who have been determined not to be a danger to the community and whose appearance at future proceedings can be reasonably ensured by less restrictive conditions.” Far from imposing any undue burden, allowing bond hearings for noncitizens apprehended inside the United States promotes fairness and efficiency.

48. Accordingly, under *Mathews*, the procedures used to detain Petitioner fail to satisfy procedural due process. The IJ’s refusal to exercise jurisdiction, based solely on DHS’s misclassification of Petitioner as subject to §1225(b)(2), constituted a denial of any meaningful opportunity to be heard. The Government’s blanket invocation of “mandatory detention” cannot substitute for constitutionally required process.

49. Even apart from procedural deficiencies, Petitioner’s continued confinement violates substantive due process. Government detention is constitutionally permissible only when it occurs in a criminal context with robust procedural protections, or in civil circumstances where a “special justification” outweighs the individual’s liberty interest. *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 690. No such justification exists here.

50. Petitioner’s confinement is purely civil and ostensibly intended to ensure his presence for removal proceedings. Yet the Government has offered no individualized justification for his ongoing detention, no finding that he poses a danger or flight risk, because the IJ never

reached those issues. Detaining a long-term Florida resident without such a finding serves no legitimate regulatory goal and instead amounts to impermissible punishment.

51. Respondents rely on *Matter of Yajure-Hurtado*, 28 I. & N. Dec. 1 (BIA 2025), to argue that the IJ lacked jurisdiction to consider bond because Petitioner is “an arriving alien” detained under §1225(b)(2). That reliance is misplaced. Although Petitioner was initially encountered near the border, he was classified as an unaccompanied child, transferred to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and subsequently released into the United States. He has since resided in the country while pursuing relief in regular removal proceedings. He is therefore properly detained under §1226(a), which provides for discretionary release on bond. The BIA’s decision in *Yajure-Hurtado* cannot override Congress’s clear statutory distinction between §1225(b)(2) (governing those seeking admission at the border) and §1226(a) (governing those already present in the United States).

52. By adopting DHS’s erroneous interpretation, the IJ denied Petitioner any opportunity for an individualized bond determination. This denial renders his continued detention arbitrary, indefinite, and unconstitutional. *See Rodriguez v. Bostock*, 779 F. Supp. 3d 1239 (W.D. Wash. 2025) (holding that detention of noncitizens apprehended within the U.S. under §1225(b)(2) violates due process and exceeds statutory authority).

53. Because Petitioner’s detention falls under §1226(a), he is entitled to a prompt and meaningful bond hearing at which the Government bears the burden to justify continued detention by clear and convincing evidence. The IJ’s refusal to conduct such a hearing, and DHS’s misapplication of *Yajure-Hurtado*, violated the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.

**CLAIMS FOR RELIEF**

**COUNT I**

**VIOLATION OF THE DUE PROCESS CLAUSE OF THE FIFTH AMENDMENT**

**Substantive Due Process**

54. The Supreme Court has found that the “Due Process Clause applies to all persons within the United States, including [non-citizens], whether their presence is lawful, unlawful, temporary, or permanent.” *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 682.

55. Immigration detention must always “bear[] a reasonable relation to the purpose for which the individual was committed.” *Demore*, 538 U.S. at 527. Petitioner has been detained for over three months without any individualized custody determination. At his initial bond hearing, the Immigration Judge declined to exercise jurisdiction, citing *Matter of Yajure-Hurtado*, 28 I. & N. Dec. 1 (BIA 2025), and therefore refused to assess whether Petitioner posed a danger or flight risk. As a result, Petitioner remains confined without any finding that his detention is necessary to serve a legitimate regulatory purpose. Such unexamined and indefinite detention bears no reasonable relation to ensuring appearance at removal proceedings or protecting public safety.

56. By categorically denying Petitioner the opportunity for individualized review, Respondents have transformed a civil regulatory scheme into punitive confinement in violation of substantive due process. The Fifth Amendment forbids detention that is arbitrary, excessive in relation to its purpose, or unsupported by individualized justification. *See Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 690. Because Petitioner has never been found to be a danger or flight risk, and because Respondents have provided no special justification for continued incarceration, his detention is not reasonably related to its purpose and thereby violates his due process rights.

## COUNT II

### **VIOLATION OF THE DUE PROCESS CLAUSE OF THE FIFTH AMENDMENT**

#### **Procedural Due Process**

57. Under *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319 (1976), courts evaluate whether adjudicatory procedures sufficiently protect individuals' due process rights.

58. Petitioner has been denied any meaningful process to challenge his confinement. Although the Immigration Court scheduled a bond hearing, the Immigration Judge declined jurisdiction and refused to consider release, citing *Matter of Yajure-Hurtado*, 28 I. & N. Dec. 1 (BIA 2025). As a result, Petitioner was never afforded an individualized determination of whether he poses a danger or flight risk. Respondents' application of *Matter of Yajure-Hurtado* and the resulting refusal to hold a bond hearing violate the procedural component of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.

## COUNT III

### **VIOLATION OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT, 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a)**

#### **No Authority to Detain**

59. 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) authorizes immigration detention only during pending removal proceedings. Respondents' reliance on § 1225(b)(2) to deny Petitioner a bond hearing and to classify him as subject to mandatory detention is contrary to the plain language and structure of the INA, as well as its legislative history and judicial interpretation.

60. Because Petitioner is not subject to mandatory detention, Respondents lack authority to detain him without providing a meaningful opportunity for release on bond. Continued confinement under § 1225(b)(2) exceeds the government's statutory authority and violates both the INA and the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.

**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Petitioner respectfully requests that this Court:

- a. Assume jurisdiction over this matter;
- b. Order, under the All Writs Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1651, that Respondents not transfer Petitioner outside of the jurisdiction of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida during the pendency of this petition;
- b. Declare that Respondents' actions or omissions violate the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and/or the Immigration and Nationality Act;
- c. Order Respondents to provide Petitioner with a prompt and constitutionally adequate bond hearing before An Immigration Judge with jurisdiction under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), at which the Government bears the burden of proving by clear and convincing evidence that continued detention is justified;
- d. In the alternative, order Petitioner's immediate release from custody if a bond hearing is not held within seven (7) days of this Court's order;
- e. Award Petitioner reasonable fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act, 5 U.S. Code § 504;
- d. Grant any other further relief this Court deems just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: February 13, 2026

/s/ Felix A. Montanez

/s/ Gizelle Rodriguez

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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 the Petitioner because I am Petitioner's attorney. I have discussed with the Petitioner the events described in this Petition. Based on those discussions, I hereby verify that the statements made in this Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: February 13, 2026

/s/ Gizelle Rodriguez

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