

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
SAN ANTONIO DIVISION

Juan Estuardo Lima Salazar

Petitioner,

v.

THE GEO GROUP, Owner/Operator of
South Texas ICE Detention Facility
TODD LYONS, Acting Director,
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement;
KRISTI NOEM Secretary of the
U.S. Department of Homeland Security; and
PAM BONDI,
Attorney General of the United States,
in their official capacities,

Respondents.

Case No. 5:26-cv-00272

PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS

INTRODUCTION

1. Petitioner Juan Estuardo Lima Salazar is in the physical custody of Respondents at the South Texas Detention Facility. His “Alien Number” is A  He now faces unlawful detention because the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) have erroneously concluded that all individuals like Petitioner are subject to mandatory detention.

2. Petitioner is charged with having entered the United States without admission or inspection. *See* Exhibit A, 2026 Notice to Appear issued to Respondent.

3. Based on this allegation in Petitioner's removal proceedings, DHS denies that Petitioner is eligible for release from immigration custody, consistent with a new DHS policy issued on July 8, 2025, instructing all Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) employees to consider anyone inadmissible under § 1182(a)(6)(A)(i)—i.e., those who entered the United States without admission or inspection—to be subject to detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) and therefore ineligible to be released on bond.

4. Similarly, on September 5, 2025, the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA or Board) issued a precedent decision, binding on all immigration judges, holding that an immigration judge has no authority to consider bond requests for any person who entered the United States without admission. *See Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025). The Board determined that such individuals are subject to detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) and therefore ineligible to be released on bond.

5. 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 already entered and have been residing for many years in the United States. Instead, such individuals are subject to a different statute, § 1226(a), that 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.

6. Respondents' new legal interpretation is plainly contrary to the statutory framework and contrary to decades of agency practice applying § 1226(a) to people like Petitioner.

7. Accordingly, Petitioner seeks a writ of habeas corpus requiring that he be released unless Respondents provide a bond hearing under § 1226(a) within seven days, at which they must bear the burden of demonstrating that Petitioner is a flight or security risk.

JURISDICTION

8. Petitioner is in the physical custody of Respondents. Petitioner is detained at the South Texas Detention Facility owned and operated by The Geo Group in Pearsall, Texas.

9. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 2241(c)(5) (habeas corpus), 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question), and Article I, section 9, clause 2 of the United States Constitution (the Suspension Clause).

10. This Court may grant relief pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241, the Declaratory Judgment Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2201 *et seq.*, and the All Writs Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1651.

VENUE

11. Pursuant to *Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky*, 410 U.S. 484, 493-500 (1973), venue lies in the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, the judicial district in which Petitioner currently is detained.

12. Venue is also properly in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e) because Respondents are employees, officers, and agencies of the United States, and because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims occurred in the Western District of Texas.

REQUIREMENTS OF 28 U.S.C. § 2243

13. The Court must grant the petition for writ of habeas corpus or order Respondents to show cause “forthwith,” unless the petitioner is not entitled to relief. 28 U.S.C. § 2243. If an

order to show cause is issued, Respondents must file a return “within three days unless for good cause additional time, not exceeding twenty days, is allowed.” *Id.*

14. Habeas corpus is “perhaps the most important writ known to the constitutional law . . . affording as it does a *swift* and imperative remedy in all cases of illegal restraint or confinement.” *Fay v. Noia*, 372 U.S. 391, 400 (1963) (emphasis added). “The application for the writ usurps the attention and displaces the calendar of the judge or justice who entertains it and receives prompt action from him within the four corners of the application.” *Yong v. I.N.S.*, 208 F.3d 1116, 1120 (9th Cir. 2000) (citation omitted).

PARTIES

15. Petitioner Juan Lima Salazar is a citizen of Guatemala who has been in immigration detention since December 30, 2025. After arresting Petitioner, ICE did not set bond and Petitioner is unable to obtain review of his custody by an IJ, pursuant to the Board’s decision in *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 216 (BIA 2025).

16. Respondent The Geo Group owns and operates the South Texas Detention Center where Petitioner is detained. They have immediate physical custody of Petitioner. They are sued in their official capacity.

17. Respondent Todd Lyons is the Acting Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. As such, he is directly responsible for policies that apply to Petitioner’s detention and removal. He is named in his official capacity.

18. Respondent Kristi Noem is the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. She is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), and oversees ICE, which is responsible for Petitioner’s detention. Ms. Noem has ultimate custodial authority over Petitioner and is sued in her official capacity.

19. Respondent Pamela Bondi is the Attorney General of the United States. She is responsible for the Department of Justice, of which the Executive Office for Immigration Review and the immigration court system it operates is a component agency. She is sued in her official capacity.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

20. The INA prescribes three basic forms of detention for the vast majority of noncitizens in removal proceedings.

21. First, 8 U.S.C. § 1226 authorizes the detention of noncitizens in standard removal proceedings before an IJ. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1229a. Individuals in § 1226(a) detention are generally entitled to a bond hearing at the outset of their detention, *see* 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.19(a), 1236.1(d), while noncitizens who have been arrested, charged with, or convicted of certain crimes are subject to mandatory detention, *see* 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c).

22. Second, the INA provides for mandatory detention of noncitizens subject to expedited removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1) and for other recent arrivals “seeking admission” referred to under § 1225(b)(2).

23. Last, the INA also provides for detention of noncitizens who have been ordered removed, including individuals in withholding-only proceedings, *see* 8 U.S.C. § 1231(a)–(b).

24. This case concerns the detention provisions at §§ 1226(a) and 1225(b)(2).

25. The detention provisions at § 1226(a) and § 1225(b)(2) were enacted as part of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104–208, Div. C, §§ 302–03, 110 Stat. 3009–546, 3009–582 to 3009–583, 3009–585. Section 1226(a) was most recently amended earlier this year by the Laken Riley Act, Pub. L. No. 119–1, 139 Stat. 3 (2025).

26. Following the 1996 enactment of the IIRIRA, EOIR drafted new regulations explaining that, in general, people who entered the country without inspection were not considered detained under § 1225 and that they were instead detained under § 1226(a). *See* Inspection and Expedited Removal of Aliens; Detention and Removal of Aliens; Conduct of Removal Proceedings; Asylum Procedures, 62 Fed. Reg. 10312, 10323 (Mar. 6, 1997).

27. Thus, in the decades that followed, most people who entered without inspection and were placed in standard removal proceedings received bond hearings, unless their criminal history rendered them ineligible pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c). That practice was consistent with many more decades of prior practice, in which noncitizens who were not deemed “arriving” were entitled to a custody hearing before an IJ or other hearing officer. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a) (1994); *see also* H.R. Rep. No. 104-469, pt. 1, at 229 (1996) (noting that § 1226(a) simply “restates” the detention authority previously found at § 1252(a)).

28. On July 8, 2025, ICE, “in coordination with” DOJ, announced a new policy that rejected and upended well-established understanding of the statutory framework and reversed decades of practice.

29. The new policy, entitled “Interim Guidance Regarding Detention Authority for Applicants for Admission,”¹ claims that all persons who entered the United States without inspection shall now be subject to mandatory detention provision under § 1225(b)(2)(A). The policy applies regardless of when a person is apprehended, and affects those who have resided in the United States for months, years, and even decades.

30. On September 5, 2025, the BIA adopted this same position in a published decision, *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*. There, the Board held that all noncitizens who entered the

¹ Available at <https://www.aila.org/library/ice-memo-interim-guidance-regarding-detention-authority-for-applications-for-admission>.

United States without admission or parole are subject to detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A) and are ineligible for IJ bond hearings. Since Respondents adopted their new policies, dozens of federal courts have rejected their new interpretation of the INA's detention authorities, as well as *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*. See, e.g., *Rodriguez Vazquez 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); *Diaz Martinez v. Hyde*, No. CV 25-11613-BEM, --- F. Supp. 3d ----, 2025 WL 2084238 (D. Mass. July 24, 2025); *Rosado v. Figueroa*, No. CV 25-02157 PHX DLR (CDB), 2025 WL 2337099 (D. Ariz. Aug. 11, 2025), *report and recommendation adopted*, No. CV-25-02157-PHX-DLR (CDB), 2025 WL 2349133 (D. Ariz. Aug. 13, 2025); *Lopez Benitez v. Francis*, No. 25 CIV. 5937 (DEH), 2025 WL 2371588 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 13, 2025); *Maldonado v. Olson*, No. 0:25-cv-03142-SRN-SGE, 2025 WL 2374411 (D. Minn. Aug. 15, 2025); *Arrazola-Gonzalez v. Noem*, No. 5:25-cv-01789-ODW (DFMx), 2025 WL 2379285 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 15, 2025); *Romero v. Hyde*, No. 25-11631-BEM, 2025 WL 2403827 (D. Mass. Aug. 19, 2025); *Samb v. Joyce*, No. 25 CIV. 6373 (DEH), 2025 WL 2398831 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 19, 2025); *Ramirez Clavijo v. Kaiser*, No. 25-CV-06248-BLF, 2025 WL 2419263 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 21, 2025); *Leal-Hernandez v. Noem*, No. 1:25-cv-02428-JRR, 2025 WL 2430025 (D. Md. Aug. 24, 2025); *Kostak v. Trump*, No. 3:25-cv-01093-JE-KDM, 2025 WL 2472136 (W.D. La. Aug. 27, 2025); *Jose J.O.E. v. Bondi*, No. 25-CV-3051 (ECT/DJF), --- F. Supp. 3d ----, 2025 WL 2466670 (D. Minn. Aug. 27, 2025); *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-cv-12486-BRM-EAS, 2025 WL 2496379 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025); *Vasquez Garcia v. Noem*, No. 25-cv-02180-DMS-MM, 2025 WL 2549431 (S.D. Cal. Sept. 3, 2025); *Zaragoza Mosqueda v. Noem*, No. 5:25-CV-02304 CAS (BFM), 2025 WL 2591530 (C.D. Cal. Sept. 8, 2025); *Pizarro Reyes v. Raycraft*, No. 25-CV-12546, 2025 WL 2609425 (E.D. Mich. Sept. 9, 2025); *Sampiao v. Hyde*, No. 1:25-CV-

11981-JEK, 2025 WL 2607924 (D. Mass. Sept. 9, 2025); *see also, e.g., Palma Perez v. Berg*, No. 8:25CV494, 2025 WL 2531566, at *2 (D. Neb. Sept. 3, 2025) (noting that “[t]he Court tends to agree” that § 1226(a) and not § 1225(b)(2) authorizes detention); *Jacinto v. Trump*, No. 4:25-cv-03161-JFB-RCC, 2025 WL 2402271 at *3 (D. Neb. Aug. 19, 2025) (same); *Anicasio v. Kramer*, No. 4:25-cv-03158-JFB-RCC, 2025 WL 2374224 at *2 (D. Neb. Aug. 14, 2025) (same), *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-cv-12486-BRM-EAS, 2025 WL 2496379 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025); *Cuevas Guzman v. Andrews*, 2025 WL 2617256 (E.D. Cal. Sept. 9, 2025); *Savane v. Francis*, No. 1:25-cv-6666, 2025 WL 2774452 (S.D.N.Y. Sept. 28, 2025), *Quijaba Cordoba v. Knight*, 1:25-cv-00605-BLW, --- F.Supp.3d ----, 2025 WL 3228945 (D. Id., Nov. 19, 2025); *Flores-Boziere v. Bondi et al.*, 5:24-cv-1853-JKP, 2026 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1859 *12, 2026 LX 29597 (WDTX January 5, 2026). Courts have uniformly rejected DHS’s and EOIR’s new interpretation because it defies the INA. As the jurists in these cases have explained, the plain text of the statutory provisions demonstrates that § 1226(a), not § 1225(b), applies to people like Petitioner.

31. Section 1226(a) applies by default to all persons “pending a decision on whether the [noncitizen] is to be removed from the United States.” These removal hearings are held under § 1229a, to “decid[e] the inadmissibility or deportability of a[] [noncitizen].”

32. The text of § 1226 also explicitly applies to people charged as being inadmissible, including those who entered without inspection. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c)(1)(E). Subparagraph (E)’s reference to such people makes clear that, by default, such people are afforded a bond hearing under subsection (a). As the *Rodriguez Vazquez* court reaffirmed, “[w]hen Congress creates ‘specific exceptions’ to a statute’s applicability, it ‘proves’ that absent those exceptions, the statute generally applies.” *Rodriguez Vazquez*, 779 F. Supp. 3d at 1257 (citing *Shady Grove*

Orthopedic Assocs., P.A. v. Allstate Ins. Co., 559 U.S. 393, 400 (2010)); *see also Gomes*, 2025 WL 1869299, at *7.

33. Section 1226 therefore leaves no doubt that it applies to people, like petitioner, who face charges of being inadmissible to the United States, including those who are present without admission or parole.

34. By contrast, § 1225(b) applies to people arriving at U.S. borders or ports of entry or who recently entered the United States. This section of the statute's entire framework is premised on inspections at the border of people who are "seeking admission" to the United States. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). Indeed, the Supreme Court has explained that this mandatory detention scheme applies "at the Nation's borders and ports of entry, where the Government must determine whether a[] [noncitizen] seeking to enter the country is admissible." *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281, 287 (2018).

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

FACTS

36. Petitioner entered the United States without inspection in approximately 2019 at the age of 16 years. *See* Exhibit B, 2019 Notice to Appear issued to Petitioner. He was apprehended immediately upon entry by agents of Defendant DHS and, after 27 days in their custody, was released to an uncle residing in Burnet, Texas. In 2020, Petitioner was declared dependent on the Family Court of Burnet County as a juvenile who had been abandoned, neglected, or abused by one or both of his parents. *See* Exhibit C, Final Order of Burnet County Family Court. Accordingly, Petitioner applied to Defendant DHS for Special Immigrant Juvenile

Status pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(27)(J), which Defendants DHS approved on May 6, 2021. *See* Exhibit D, I-360 Approval Notice for Petitioner's Form I-360. On August 3, 2022, Defendants DHS issued him a work authorization document, which remains valid, and which petitioner used to procure his Texas driver's license. *See* Exhibit E, Petitioner's Work Authorization Document and Texas driver's license.

37. On August 5, 2022, Petitioner's former removal proceedings were terminated pursuant to a joint motion filed by Defendants ICE and Petitioner through undersigned counsel. *See* Exhibit F, Order Granting Joint Motion to Dismiss. Since that time, Petitioner has lived and worked in Burnet, Texas waiting for his opportunity to apply for permanent resident status, which typically takes approximately four to five years due to backlogs in the number of available visas for Special Immigrant Juveniles.

38. Petitioner has had no encounters with law enforcement until his detention following a traffic stop on December 30, 2025. On that date, Petitioner was detained by Texas State Troopers, allegedly for speeding. No ticket or warning was issued. Instead, Respondents ICE arrived at the scene and detained Petitioner and his other passengers. Petitioner was then transferred to Respondents' custody where he remains, despite his grant of Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, his valid work authorization document, and his valid Texas driver's license.

39. DHS placed Petitioner in removal proceedings before the San Antonio, Texas pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1229a. ICE has charged Petitioner with, *inter alia*, being inadmissible under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(A)(i) as someone who entered the United States without inspection.

40. Petitioner has not requested a bond hearing, but such a request is not required for this Court to consider this petition for habeas corpus because such a request would be futile.

Pursuant to *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, the immigration judge is unable to consider Petitioner's bond request.

41. As a result, Petitioner remains in detention. Without relief from this court, he faces the prospect of months, or even years, in immigration custody, unable to continue working lawfully, providing for himself, and contributing to his community.

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

COUNT I

Violation of the INA

42. Petitioner incorporates by reference the allegations of fact set forth in the preceding paragraphs.

43. The mandatory detention provision at 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) does not apply to all noncitizens residing in the United States who are subject to the grounds of inadmissibility. As relevant here, it does not apply to those who previously entered the country and have been residing in the United States prior to being apprehended and placed in removal proceedings by Respondents. Such noncitizens are detained under § 1226(a), unless they are subject to § 1225(b)(1), § 1226(c), or § 1231.

44. The application of § 1225(b)(2) to Petitioner unlawfully mandates his continued detention and violates the INA.

COUNT II

Violation of Due Process

45. Petitioner repeats, re-alleges, and incorporates by reference each and every allegation in the preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

46. The government may not deprive a person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. U.S. Const. amend. V. “Freedom from imprisonment—from government custody, detention, or other forms of physical restraint—lies at the heart of the liberty that the Clause protects.” *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 690 (2001).

47. Petitioner has a fundamental interest in liberty and being free from official restraint while he awaits the adjudication of his application for lawful permanent residence, which he is now eligible to file.

48. The government’s detention of Petitioner without a bond redetermination hearing to determine whether DHS can establish that he is a flight risk or danger to others violates his right to due process.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Petitioner prays that this Court grant the following relief:

- a. Assume jurisdiction over this matter;
- b. Order that Petitioner shall not be transferred outside the San Antonio Division of the Western District of Texas while this habeas petition is pending;
- c. Issue an Order to Show Cause ordering Respondents to show cause why this Petition should not be granted within three days;
- d. Issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus requiring that Respondents release Petitioner immediately or, in the alternative, provide Petitioner with a bond hearing pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), in which DHS shall bear the burden of establishing that Petitioner is a flight or security risk within seven days;
- e. Declare that Petitioner’s detention is unlawful;

- f. Award Petitioner attorney's fees and costs under the Equal Access to Justice Act ("EAJA"), as amended, 28 U.S.C. § 2412, and on any other basis justified under law; and
- g. Grant any other and further relief that this Court deems just and proper.

DATED this 19th of January, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

s/Jennifer Walker Gates
JLW Immigration Law Group
PO Box 202050
Austin, Texas 78759
jennifer@jlw.law
Counsel for Petitioner

VERIFICATION PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 2242

I represent Petitioner, Juan Estuardo Lima Salazar, and submit this verification on his behalf. I hereby verify that the factual statements made in the foregoing Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Dated this 19th day of January 19, 2026.

s/Jennifer Walker Gates
Counsel for Petitioner

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on January 19, 2026, I sent a true and correct copy of the foregoing Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus to be served pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 5 and in compliance with the Local Rules of the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas to the Respondents via electronic filing through CM/ECF:

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