

**THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
EL PASO DIVISION**

FLORIBERTO SEBASTIAN

RODRIGUEZ,

Petitioner,

V.

PAMELA BONDI, ATTORNEY

GENERAL,

KRISTI NOEM, SECRETARY, U.S.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

SECURITY,

TODD M. LYONS, ACTING DIRECTOR

OF IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS

ENFORCEMENT.

DAVID EASTERWOOD, ACTING

DIRECTOR ST. PAUL FIELD OFFICE

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS

ENFORCEMENT

Respondents.

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CASE NO. 3:26-CV-00292-DB

## REPLY IN SUPPORT OF PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS

COMES NOW, Petitioner, Mr. Floriberto Sebastian Rodriguez, (“Mr. Sebastian Rodriguez”), by and through the undersigned counsel, and submits this reply in support of his Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus and the relief requested therein. Despite Respondents’ assertions otherwise, Petitioner is still entitled to the relief requested in his petition even with the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal’s *Buenrostro-Mendez* ruling.

Respondents' Brief, although inclusive of some facts regarding Mr. Sebastian Rodriguez, does little to address the specifics of Mr. Sebastian Rodriguez's Petition. Instead, it appears to be a broadly drafted, boilerplate response Respondents intend to file in every pending habeas matter currently pending within the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals'

jurisdiction. Their arguments, however, fail to acknowledge the constitutional due process rights promised to every person in this country, regardless of their national origin.

**I. THE FIFTH CIRCUIT'S *BUENROSTRO-MENDEZ* DECISION**

It should be noted that immigration detention in the United States operates at the intersection of statutory authority and constitutional limits. While the Immigration and Nationality Act (“INA”) provides the government with broad detention powers, these powers are not unlimited. The Fifth Circuit’s recent decision in *Buenrostro-Mendez v. Bondi*, No. 25-20496, 2026 WL 32330 (5th Cir. Feb. 6, 2026) does operate to narrow certain statutory avenues for release, but it does not eliminate Petitioner’s inherent constitutional protections.

The *Buenrostro-Mendez* ruling, issued just 10 days ago on February 6, 2026, overrules the substantial body of judicial analysis and authority by holding that §1225(b)’s mandatory detention provisions may be applied to all applicants for admission to the U.S. who entered without inspection, whether they were apprehended at the border or after a period of living in the country. *Buenrostro-Mendez*, 2026 WL 323330 at \*1. *Buenrostro-Mendez* did not address any issues other than this narrow question of statutory construction. *Id.* In particular, the opinion does not examine any due process challenge to the mandatory detention policy. *Id.*

Moreover, the *Buenrostro-Mendez* ruling almost certainly will generate a circuit split on this issue and reach the Supreme Court, given the broad consensus among courts across multiple circuits that §1225(b) cannot be read so broadly. Indeed, in December 2025, the Seventh Circuit, in ruling on the government’s emergency motion to stay a

district court's decision to order release of detainees, wrote that "given the factual record before us, we conclude that Defendants are not likely to succeed on the merits of their argument that those individuals, whom ICE arrested in Chicago without a warrant, are subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A)."<sup>1</sup> *Castanon-Nava v. U.S. Dep't Homeland Security*, 161 F.4th 1048, 1601 (7th Cir. 2025). Accordingly, Petitioner does not withdraw his claims for relief rooted in challenges to the application of §1225(b) in this case.

## **II. PETITIONER IS ENTITLED TO RELIEF UNDER A DUE PROCESS ANALYSIS.**

All persons within the United States possess a cognizable, protectable liberty interest in freedom from physical restraint in the most basic constitutional sense, and habeas corpus remains the fundamental instrument for safeguarding that liberty by ensuring immigration detention is not arbitrary, unlawful, or inconsistent with due process. In line with this principle, multiple federal courts in the Fifth Circuit have granted habeas relief on procedural due process grounds notwithstanding the statutory limitations addressed in *Buenrostro*.

To determine whether a civil detention violates a detainee's due process rights, courts apply the three-part test set forth in *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 96 S.Ct. 893, 47 L.Ed.2d 18 (1976). Those factors are: (1) "the private interest that will be affected by the official action"; (2) "the risk of an erroneous deprivation of such interest through

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<sup>1</sup> And, on February 3, 2026, the Seventh Circuit held oral argument on the merits in the *Castanon-Nava* case. See <https://media.ca7.uscourts.gov/oralArguments/oar.jsp?caseyear=&casenumber=&period=Past+month>.

the procedures used, and the probable value, if any, of additional or substitute procedural safeguards”; and (3) “the Government's interest, including the function involved and the fiscal and administrative burdens that the additional or substitute procedural requirement would entail.” *Mathews*, 424 U.S. at 335, 96 S.Ct. 893; *see also Hernandez-Fernandez v. Lyons*, 2025 WL 2976923 at \*8 (W.D. Tex. Oct. 21, 2025).

“‘The interest in being free from physical detention’ is ‘the most elemental of liberty interests.’” *Martinez v. Noem*, No. 5:25-CV-01007-JKP, 2025 WL 2598379, at \*2 (W.D. Tex. Sept. 8, 2025) (quoting *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507, 529 (2004)). Federal courts in Texas have found that noncitizens have a protected liberty interest in their freedom, regardless of citizenship status, when they have spent time living, working, or supporting a family in the interior of the United States. *See, e.g., Lopez Miranda v. Flores*, No. EP-25-CV-584-KC, 2025 WL 3901908, at \*3 (W.D. Tex. Dec. 10, 2025); *Chinchilla v. De Anda-Ybarra*, No. EP-25-CV-00548-DB, 2025 WL 3645178 (W.D. Tex. Dec. 16, 2025) (finding noncitizen has protectable liberty interest because he was “living in the United States for over four years and attends his local church”); *Hernandez-Fernandez*, 2025 WL 2976923 at \*9 (“Because he spent nearly three years at liberty in the United States, [petitioner] possesses a cognizable interest in his freedom from detention.”).

The government’s refusal to provide bond hearings creates a high risk of erroneous deprivation, since the process afforded in removal proceedings does “not ameliorate the risk that [a petitioner] will be erroneously deprived of his liberty while his removability is assessed.” *See Rojas v. Noem*, 2025 WL 3038262 at \*3-\*4. Bond hearings that “conduct individualized custody determinations considering flight risk and dangerousness” are the

precise “type of proceeding that would give [a noncitizen] an opportunity to be heard and to receive a meaningful assessment of whether he is dangerous or likely to abscond.” *Id.* at \*4.

Regardless of the government’s purported interest in enforcing its interpretation of the immigration detention statutes, a habeas petitioner’s “constitutional interest in his liberty exists above and apart from the INA.” *Rojas*, 2025 WL 3038262 at \*4 (citing *A.A.R.P. v. Trump*, 605 U.S. 91, 94 (2025) (“[T]he Fifth Amendment entitles aliens to due process of law in the context of removal proceedings.”)). Further, while the government “has an interest in ensuring that noncitizens appear for their removal hearings and do not pose a danger to the community,” such interest “would be squarely addressed through a bond hearing.” *Id.* (citing *Martinez v. Noem*, 2025 WL 2598379 at \*4 (W.D. Tex. Sep. 8, 2025)).

Federal courts in the Fifth Circuit have repeatedly granted release on procedural due process grounds. *Santiago v. Noem*, 2025 WL 2792588 (W.D. Tex. Oct. 2, 2025); *Hernandez-Fernandez v. Lyons*, 2025 WL 2976923 (W.D. Tex. Oct. 21, 2025); *Parada-Hernandez v. Johnson*, 2025 WL 3465958 (N.D. Tex. Oct. 29, 2025), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2025 WL 3463682 (N.D. Tex. Dec. 2, 2025); *Rojas v. Noem*, 2025 WL 3038262 (W.D. Tex. Oct. 30, 2025); *De Leon Hernandez v. Bondi*, 2025 WL 3217037 (W.D. La. Nov. 18, 2025); *Cruz-Reyes v. Bondi*, Case No. 5:26-cv-0060, WestLaw cite pending (S.D. Tex. Feb. 3, 2026).

More importantly, the Western District of Texas has reviewed these due process issues in the light of the *Buenrostro-Mendez* ruling and have concluded that it “does not

change the case's outcome on procedural due process grounds." *Hassen v. Noem*, 3:26-cv-00048-DB (W.D. Tex. Feb. 9, 2026); *Clemente Ceballos v. Garite*, 3:26-cv-00312-DB (W.D. Tex. Feb. 10, 2026).

Courts examining the application of § 1225 to petitioners who, like Mr. Sebastian Rodriguez, were not detained upon entry and who have lived in the United States for some time have routinely found that mandatory detention is unconstitutional as applied to these individuals, because "non-punitive detention in the immigration context violates the Due Process Clause,' absent 'adequate procedural protections' or a 'special justification' outweighing a petitioner's liberty interest." *Gonzalez-Albornoz v. Olson*, No. CV-25-208-DLB, 2026 WL 251955, at \*3 (E.D. Ky. Jan. 30, 2026) (citing *Azalyar v. Raycraft*, No. 1:25-CV-916, 2026 WL 30741, at \*3 (S.D. Ohio Jan. 2, 2026) (quoting *Padilla v. United States Immigr. & Customs Enft*, 704 F. Supp. 3d 1163, 1172 (W.D. Wash. 2003) and *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 690 (2001))).

The Western District of Texas thoughtfully analyzed this issue in *Hernandez-Fernandez v. Lyons*, 2025 WL 2976923, at \*8. The Petitioner in *Hernandez-Fernandez* was engaged in active asylum proceedings and had not been previously detained. *Hernandez-Fernandez*, 2025 WL 2976923 at \*7-8. He lived in the United States for some time, until he was swept up in the recent policy change and detained under the government's new mandatory detention policy. *Id.* The *Hernandez-Fernandez* court declined to analyze whether the new, expanded interpretation of § 1225(b)'s mandatory detention authority is lawful, noting instead that the policy as applied "fail[s] to contend with the liberty interests created by the fact that the Petitioner[] in this case [was] released

on recognizance *prior to the manifestation of this interpretation.*” (citing *Lopez-Arevelo v. Ripa*, 801 F.Supp.3d 668, 677–78 (W.D. Tex. 2025) (internal citations omitted)).

The Court applied the familiar three factor test set out in *Mathews v. Eldridge* to determine whether the new mandatory detention policy was unconstitutional as applied to the petitioner. *Hernandez-Fernandez*, 2025 WL 2976923 at \*7-8 (citing *Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 96 S.Ct. 893, 47 L.Ed.2d 18 (1976); *Martinez v. Noem*, No. 5:25-CV-1007-JKP, 2025 WL 2598379, at \*2 (W.D. Tex. Sept. 8, 2025)).

As to the first factor, the private interest affected by the challenged action, the *Hernandez-Fernandez* court noted that “[t]he interest in being free from physical detention’ is ‘the most elemental of liberty interests.’” *Hernandez-Fernandez* 2025 WL2976923, at \*8 (quoting *Martinez v. Sec. Noem*, No. 5:25-CV-01007-JKP, 2025 WL 2598379, at \*2 (W.D. Tex. Sept. 8, 2025)). The court did not reach whether a mandatory detention policy can lawfully cabin that interest for individuals arrested near the border, but instead found that the petitioner, who had been living in the interior of the U.S. and who had an ongoing asylum proceeding, had a protected liberty interest in remaining free while his case continued. *Hernandez-Fernandez* 2025 WL2976923, at \*8 (citing *Lopez-Arevelo v. Ripa*, 801 F.Supp.3d 668, 677–78 (W.D. Tex. 2025); *Espinoza v. Kaiser*, No. 1:25-CV-01101 JLT SKO, 2025 WL 2581185, at \*10 (E.D. Cal. Sept. 5, 2025)). The *Hernandez-Fernandez* court noted that “once released from immigration custody, noncitizens acquire ‘a protectable liberty interest in remaining out of custody on bond.’” *Id.* (quoting *Diaz v. Kaiser*, No. 25-CV-05071, 2025 WL 1676854, at \*2 (N.D. Cal. June 14, 2025) (collecting cases)); accord *M.S.L. v. Bostock*, No. 6:25-CV-01204-AA, 2025 WL 2430267, at \*8 (D.

Or. Aug. 21, 2025) (“Just as people on preparole, parole, and probation status have a liberty interest, so too does [a noncitizen released from immigration detention] have a liberty interest in remaining out of custody on bond.”) (quoting *Ortega v. Bonnar*, 415 F. Supp. 3d 963, 969 (N.D. Cal. 2019)); *Rosado v. Figueroa*, No. 25-CV-02157, 2025 WL 2337099, at \*12 (D. Ariz. Aug. 11, 2025) (same).

In applying the second *Mathews* factor, the *Hernandez-Fernandez* court found that the immigration court’s current policy of mandatory detention without bond under § 1225 creates a “high risk that [Petitioner] has been and will continue to be erroneously deprived of his liberty.” *Hernandez-Fernandez*, 2025 WL 2976923 at \*9 citing *Espinoza v. Kaiser*, No. 1:25-CV-01101 JLT SKO, 2025 WL 2581185, at \*11 (E.D. Cal. Sept. 5, 2025)). Because “individualized custody determinations ... consider[ing] flight risk and dangerousness” are a safeguard that is typically available and that would “greatly reduce the risk of an erroneous deprivation of his liberty,” the court found the second *Mathews* factor favored the petitioner. *Hernandez-Fernandez*, 2025 WL 2976923, at \*9 (citing *Velesaca v. Decker*, 458 F. Supp. 3d 224, 242 (S.D.N.Y. 2020)).

Finally, the *Hernandez Fernandez* court examined the third *Mathews* factor: “the government’s interest in ensuring that noncitizens appear for their removal hearings and do not pose a danger to the community.” *Hernandez-Fernandez*, 2025 WL 2976923, at \*9. The Court found the petitioner’s involvement in ongoing asylum proceedings on a non-detained basis “reflects a determination by the government that the noncitizen is not a danger to the community or a flight risk.” *Id.* (quoting *Saravia v. Sessions*, 280 F. Supp. 3d 1168, 1176 (N.D. Cal. 2017), *aff’d* 905 F.3d 1137 (9th Cir. 2018)).

The court further noted that any incremental cost resulting from the need to provide bond hearings to people like petitioner “cannot be terribly burdensome, given the BIA concedes in *Yajure Hurtado* ‘[w]e acknowledge that for years Immigration Judges have conducted bond hearings for aliens who entered the United States without inspection.’” *Hernandez-Fernandez*, 2025 WL 2976923, at \*10 (quoting *In re: Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216, 226 (BIA 2025)); accord *Singh v. Andrews*, No. 25-CV-00801, 2025 WL 1918679, at \*8 (E.D. Cal. July 11, 2025) (“In immigration court, custody hearings are routine and impose a ‘minimal’ cost.”) (*Doe v. Becerra*, 787 F.Supp.3d 1083, 1094–95 (E.D. Cal. 2025)). The *Hernandez-Fernandez* court thus found this factor also weighs in favor of habeas relief.

Based on this analysis of the *Mathews* factors, the *Hernandez-Fernandez* court ruled that “detaining [the petitioner] without any individualized assessment of his flight risk and dangerousness deprives him of his constitutional right to procedural due process under the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution.” *Hernandez-Fernandez*, 2025 WL 2976923, at \*10. The Court noted “a growing number of district courts across the country who have found that holding people like Hernandez-Fernandez in mandatory detention without a bond hearing likely constitutes a due process violation.” *Id.* (citing *Espinoza v. Kaiser*, No. 25-CV-01101, 2025 WL 2581185, at \*11–12 (E.D. Cal. Sept. 5, 2025); *Kostak v. Trump*, No. CV 3:25-CV-01093, 2025 WL 2472136, at \*3 (W.D. La. Aug. 27, 2025); *Singh v. Andrews*, No. 25-CV-00801, 2025 WL 1918679, at \*8–9 (E.D. Cal. July 11, 2025) (collecting cases)).

Mr. Sebastian Rodriguez stands in a similar position and is entitled to habeas relief for the same reasons articulated in *Hernandez-Fernandez*. Petitioner has a cognizable due process interest in remaining free while his case is pending, absent some showing that he is a flight risk or a danger to the community. *Hernandez-Fernandez*, 2025 WL 2976923, at \*8. The government's dragnet arrest and policy of blanket detention without bond creates a high risk that he is being deprived of this right in error; an individualized bond hearing would greatly reduce this risk. *Id.* at \*9. Finally, the government's interest in ensuring that Mr. Sebastian Rodriguez appears for his asylum proceedings and poses no danger to the community in the meantime can be satisfied by providing an individualized bond hearing to determine whether detention is appropriate. *Id.* at \*10.

Petitioner's continued detention without bond under a blanket mandatory detention policy is therefore a violation of his due process rights. *Id.* Moreover, Mr. Juarez Monroy was arrested with no warrant, a requirement for his seizure in the first place.

### **III. PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Mr. Sebastian Rodriguez prays that this Court grant the following relief;

- (1) Issue a writ of habeas corpus requiring Respondents to release Petitioner;
- (2) If the Court sees fit to order Petitioner's release, specified relief to ensure a safe return home, including release:
  - (a) Inside of Minnesota;
  - (b) At a safe time and place communicated in advance to counsel; and

- (c) With all of Petitioner's personal effects, such as driver's license, immigration papers, passport, cell phone, and keys.
- (3) Enjoin Respondents from implementing any condition of release, including ICE's "Alternatives to Detention" measures, which include ankle monitors, body-worn GPS, telephonic tracking, or use of the SmartLINK Mobile Application; and
- (4) Grant any other and further relief that this Court may deem just and proper.

Respectfully Submitted,

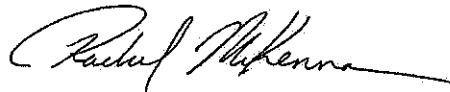


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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on February 16, 2026, I caused a copy of the foregoing Response to be served on Respondents through counsel via the Court's PACER service.



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Rachel L. McKenna