IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

RINCON SARMIENTO, *Petitioner*, v. JAMISON, J.L., *et al.*, *Respondents*.	Civil Action No. 26-2460

RESPONDENTS' OPPOSITION TO
PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS

I. INTRODUCTION

As the Court is undoubtedly aware, immigration detainees in this district have filed hundreds of petitions for writs of habeas corpus challenging the authority of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") to detain them without setting a bond hearing. These cases involve individuals who have been detained pending the completion of their removal proceedings, including consideration of their asylum claims as a defense to removal, and break down into four categories:

- ***Hurtado*[1] cases**: individuals who entered the United States without inspection; after a passage of time, they were encountered by immigration authorities in the interior, placed in standard removal proceedings, and recently were detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A); *see, e.g., Cantu-Cortes v. O'Neill*, No. 25-cv-6338, 2025 WL 3171639, at *1–2 (E.D. Pa. Nov. 13, 2025);

[1] "*Hurtado*" refers to the Board of Immigration Appeals' decision in *Matter of Hurtado*, 29 I & N Dec. 216 (BIA 2025).

- ***Q. Li*[2] cases**: individuals who entered the United States without inspection, were encountered near the border and detained without a warrant, released into the country, and, after a passage of time, recently detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A); *see, e.g., Cordero v. Rose*, No. 26-cv-534 (E.D. Pa. Jan. 29, 2026);
- **Arriving Alien cases**: individuals who presented at a port of entry without valid entry documents, were paroled into the country under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(d)(5)(A), and, after a passage of time, recently detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A); *see, e.g., Vasquez-Rosario v. Noem*, No. 25-cv-7427, 2026 WL 196505, at *5 (E.D. Pa. Jan. 26, 2026); and,
- **Expedited Removal cases**: individuals who, based on certain conditions related to their time, manner, and place of entry, were placed into expedited removal proceedings, paroled into the country under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(d)(5)(A), and, after a passage of time, recently detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1)(B)(iv); *see, e.g., Seminario Marcos v. Jamison*, No. 26-cv-421 (E.D. Pa. Feb. 6, 2026).

The first three categories of cases (*Hurtado*, *Q. Li*, and Arriving Alien) all share the same authority for mandatory detention: 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). While there are certain legal and factual distinctions among these cases, the fundamental point of departure between the government's position and the position advanced by petitioners and adopted in over 250 decisions in this district relates to the correct interpretation of § 1225(b)(2)(A):

> In the cases 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 of this title.

[2] "*Q. Li*" refers to the Board of Immigration Appeals' decision in *Matter of Q. Li,* 29 I&N Dec. 66 (BIA 2025).

8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) (emphasis added).

Although petitioners in these cases are indisputably "applicants for admission," *see* 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1), courts in this district (and many elsewhere) have concluded that § 1225(b)(2)(A) does not apply to applicants for admission who are present in the interior of the country because, these decisions conclude, the petitioners are no longer "seeking admission." Courts have reasoned that "seeking admission" should be given meaning beyond "applicant for admission" to avoid surplusage and have read the term to require active and ongoing efforts to be admitted at or near the border. *See, e.g., Kashranov v. Jamison*, Civ. No. 25-5555, 2025 WL 3188399, *6–7 (E.D. Pa. 2025); *Vasquez-Rosario*, 2026 WL 196505, at *9. By contrast, the government contends that "applicants for admission" are necessarily "seeking admission" until they have been admitted or until their removal proceedings are complete. And while the government's position has been rejected by the vast majority of district courts to have considered it, two courts of appeals to have squarely considered the argument, the Fifth and Eighth Circuit Courts of Appeals, have agreed with the government. *See Buenrostro-Mendez v. Bondi*, 166 F.4th 494, 502 (5th Cir. 2026) ("The everyday meaning of the statute's terms confirms that being an 'applicant for admission' is not a condition independent from 'seeking admission.'"); *Avila v. Bondi*, No. 25-3248, 2026 WL 819258, at *3 (8th Cir. Mar. 25, 2026) (concluding that "the structure of § 1225(b)(2)(A) does not indicate that 'seeking admission' is a separate requirement for detention under the statute"); *but see Castañon-Nava v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 161 F.4th 1048, 1062 (7th Cir. 2025) (concluding upon review of application for stay of a preliminary injunction that the government was not likely to succeed on the merits of its argument for mandatory detention of applicants for admission present in the United States under § 1225(b)(2)(A)).

This is a "*Q. Li*" case where the government has detained Petitioner under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). Petitioner, a noncitizen, crossed the border without inspection on or about September 14, 2023. (Petition, at ¶ 17). He was detained on or about September 14, 2023, placed in removal proceedings, and released. (*Id.* at ¶ 17 & Ex. A). On or around April 13, 2026, Petitioner was arrested and detained by ICE pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). (Petition, at ¶ 20).[3]

Thus, the case turns principally on the threshold question of statutory interpretation discussed above—whether petitioner is an "applicant for admission" that is "seeking admission" within the meaning of § 1225(b)(2)(A).[4] The government expands on that argument below in the context of Petitioner, who was first encountered near the border after entering without inspection (thereby falling within the scope of the BIA's decision in *Q. Li*), and addresses Petitioner's separate argument alleging a violation of due process.

II. ARGUMENT

The Court should deny the petition because: (1) Petitioner is lawfully detained pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(a); and (2) Petitioner's detention does not violate constitutional due process.

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[3] At the time of the filing of his petition, Petitioner was detained at FDC Philadelphia before being transferred to the Pike County Correctional Facility ("Pike"), where he currently remains. ICE has advised that Petitioner was transferred to Pike prior to the entry of the Court's No Transfer Order. The parties conferred and Petitioner's consent and Respondents' agree to Petitioner remaining at Pike through the adjudication of his petition.

[4] In many of its prior responses filed in this district, the government has advanced various jurisdictional arguments that it is not advancing here. Of course, the Court may appropriately satisfy itself of its jurisdiction upon consideration of 8 U.S.C. §§ 1225(b)(9), 1252(a)(2)(B)(ii), 1252(g), and the Third Circuit's decision in *Khalil v. President, United States of America*, 164 F.4th 259 (3d Cir. 2026).

A. Petitioner is lawfully detained pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2).

1. Petitioner is an "applicant for admission" "seeking admission."

An individual who "arrives in the United States," or is "present" in this country but "has not been admitted," is considered an "applicant for admission" under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1). *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281, 287 (2018); *Buenrostro-Mendez*, 166 F.4th at 499. Applicants for admission are covered by either § 1225(b)(1) or § 1225(b)(2). *See Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 287 (section 1225(b)(2) "serves as a catchall provision that applies to *all* applicants for admission not covered by § 1225(b)(1)") (emphasis added).

An alien remains an applicant for admission, and subject to § 1225(b)(2), so long as he is "not clearly and beyond doubt entitled to be admitted" to the United States. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A); *see also* 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a) (defining applicant for admission as *either* "[a]n alien present in the United States who has not been admitted *or* who arrives in the United States. . . .") (emphasis added). Congress defined *all* aliens who are present in the United States without being admitted as "applicant[s] for admission," regardless of when they entered. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1).

When an immigration officer encounters and examines an applicant for admission who seeks to remain in the United States, and that alien (like Petitioner) desires to remain in the United States, the applicant is necessarily "seeking admission" within the meaning of 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). *See Buenrostro-Mendez*, 166 F.4th at 503 ("[A]n 'applicant for admission' is necessarily someone who is 'seeking admission.'"); *id.* at 502 ("When a person applies for something, they are necessarily seeking it."). Otherwise, the alien must "withdraw the application for admission and depart immediately from the United States." 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(4). An alien continues to be "seeking admission" while in immigration removal

proceedings to determine whether he can "be admitted to the United States." *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1229a(3).

The government acknowledges that all courts in this district (and many more elsewhere) have reasoned that § 1225(b)(2)(A) requires that an "applicant for admission" be actively "seeking admission" at or near the border to fall within its scope. *See*, *e.g.*, *Kashranov*, 2025 WL 3188399, at *6–7; *Demirel v. Fed. Detention Ctr.*, Civ. No. 25-5488 (E.D. Pa. Nov. 18, 2025).[5] But, as noted, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has agreed with the government. *See Buenrostro-Mendez*, 166 F.4th at 502 ("The everyday meaning of the statute's terms confirms that being an 'applicant for admission' is not a condition independent from 'seeking admission.'"). The *Buenrostro-Mendez* court concluded, correctly, that an "applicant for admission" is "necessarily someone who is 'seeking admission.'" *Id.* at 503; *but see Castañon-Nava*, 161 F.4th at 1062.

Thus, Petitioner, who is indisputably an "applicant for admission," is also "seeking admission" and covered by § 1225(b)(2)(A).

2. Applicants for admission must be detained under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), absent discretionary parole.

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) (emphasis added). The Supreme Court has

[5] The government is pursuing appeals in the Third Circuit related to both statutory and constitutional due-process claims. The matters on appeal are *Lopes De Andrade v. Director Philadelphia Field Office Immigration and Customs Enforcement, et al.*, No. 26-1454 (3d Cir.), and *Buele Morocho v. Warden Philadelphia FDC, et al.*, No. 26-1150 (3d Cir.), which are now consolidated for all purposes. The government's consolidated opening brief was filed on March 20, 2026. The Third Circuit granted the Government's motion to expedite the consolidated appeals and scheduled them for disposition by the Court during the week of May 11, 2026.

held that § 1225(b)(2)(A) is a mandatory detention statute and that individuals detained pursuant to that provision are not entitled to bond. *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 287 ("Both § 1225(b)(1) and § 1255(b)(2) authorize the detention of certain aliens.").

In *Q. Li*, the BIA expanded upon the Supreme Court's holding in *Jennings* and clarified the scope of § 1255(b)(2) for applicants for admission, like Petitioner, who are "arriving" in the United States. 29 I&N Dec. at 68 (citing *Matter of M-D-C-V-*, 28 I&N Dec. 18, 23 (BIA 2020) (defining the term "arriving" to apply to aliens "who [are] apprehended" just inside "the southern border, and not at a point of entry, on the same day [they] crossed into the United States"). For aliens in this category, the BIA affirmed that DHS may either place the alien into expedited removal proceedings under § 1225(b)(1) or full removal proceedings under § 1229a. *Id*. For the latter category—aliens arriving in and seeking admission into the United States who are placed directly into full removal proceedings—the Board held that § 1225(b)(2)(A) mandates detention "until removal proceedings have concluded." *Id*. (citing *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 299).

Thus, the BIA held that an applicant for admission "who is arrested and detained without a warrant while arriving in the United States, whether or not at a port of entry, and subsequently placed in removal proceedings," is detained under § 1225(b)(2) and is thus ineligible for any subsequent release on bond. *But see Cordero v. Rose*, Civ. No. 26-0534, ECF No. 5 at 5-6 (E.D. Pa. Jan. 29, 2026) (Marston, J.) (disagreeing with the United States' interpretation of *Q. Li* and concluding that the petitioner, who entered the United States more than three years ago, was not an applicant for admission that was actively "seeking admission" within the meaning of § 1225(b)(2)); *Cajas-Duchimaza v. McShane*, Civ. No. 26-0621, ECF No. 6 (E.D. Pa. Feb. 3, 2026) (similar); *Gurievi v. Rose*, Civ. No. 26-0736, ECF No. 6 (E.D. Pa. Feb. 9, 2026).

Petitioner remains an applicant for admission seeking admission, as he has not clearly and beyond doubt established that he is entitled to be admitted to the United States. Consequently, he is subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2), and ineligible for a bond hearing before an immigration judge.

B. Petitioner's detention does not violate constitutional due process.

Congress broadly crafted "applicants for admission" to include undocumented persons, like Petitioner, who are present within the United States. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1). In so doing, Congress made a legislative judgment to detain undocumented persons during removal proceedings. 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A); *Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 297 ("Read most naturally, §§ 1225(b)(1) and (b)(2) thus mandate detention of applicants for admission until certain proceedings have concluded.").

The Supreme Court has repeatedly recognized this profound interest. Petitioner's mandatory detention pursuant to § 1225(b) will only last the duration of his removal proceedings. *Demore v. Kim*, 538 U.S. 510, 512 (2003) ("[B]ecause the statutory provision at issue in this case governs detention of deportable criminal aliens *pending their removal proceedings*, the detention necessarily serves the purpose of preventing the aliens from fleeing prior to or during such proceedings.") (emphasis in original); *see also Jennings*, 583 U.S. at 304. In light of Congress's interest in regulating immigration, including by keeping specified persons in detention pending the removal period, the Supreme Court dispensed of any due process concerns without engaging in the test set forth in *Matthews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319 (1976). *See generally Demore*, 538 U.S. at 531.

Petitioner's recent detention pending his removal proceedings does not violate the Due Process Clause. *See*, *e.g.*, *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 701 (2001) (detention less than six months presumed constitutional). Congress made the

decision to detain him pending removal, which is a "constitutionally permissible part of that process." *Demore*, 538 U.S. at 531.

The Third Circuit has recognized that there may come a time when mandatory civil detention without a bond hearing becomes unreasonable. *See German Santos v. Warden Pike Cnty. Corr. Facility*, 965 F.3d 203, 211 (3d Cir. 2020) (analyzing detention under § 1226(c)). However, at this time, Petitioner does not challenge the length of his detention under *German Santos*, nor could he, given that he has been detained for approximately one week.

III. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Respondents respectfully request that the petition for writ of habeas corpus be denied. Respondents request that the Court decide this petition on the papers.

Respectfully submitted,

DAVID METCALF
United States Attorney

/s/ Gregory B. David
GREGORY B. DAVID
Assistant United States Attorney
Chief, Civil Division

/s/ Fernando I. Rivera
FERNANDO I. RIVERA
Assistant United States Attorney
615 Chestnut Street, Suite 1250
Philadelphia, PA 19106
fernando.rivera@usdoj.gov

Dated: April 17, 2026

Counsel for Respondents

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that, on this date, I filed the foregoing Response in Opposition to Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus via the Court's CM/ECF System, thereby making it available for viewing and download for all parties to the case.

Dated: April 17, 2026

/s/ Fernando I. Rivera
FERNANDO I. RIVERA
Assistant United States Attorney