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

GURDEEP SINGH, *Petitioner*, v. JOHN RIFE, in his official capacity as Acting Field Office Director, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Philadelphia Field Office, *et al.*, *Respondents*.	Civil Action No. 26-2778

RESPONDENTS' OPPOSITION TO PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS AND MOTION FOR TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER

I. INTRODUCTION

As reflected in court records, 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);
- ***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

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

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

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.

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.

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. *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*, 170 F.4th 1128, 1134 (8th Cir. 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"). However, the Second Circuit has rejected the government's argument. *See Cunha v. Freden*, No. 25-3141-pr, 2026 WL 1146044 (2d Cir. Apr. 28, 2026)*; see also 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, admission or parole on or about April 27, 2023. *See* ECF No. 1 (Pet.) at ¶¶ 267. Petitioner was detained, placed in removal proceedings, and released. *Id.* at ¶¶ 26-27. On or about April 24, 2026, Petitioner was arrested and detained by ICE. *Id.* at ¶ 17.

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).[3] 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

Respondents request that the Court deny the petition on the basis that: (1) Petitioner is lawfully detained pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(a); and (2) Petitioner's detention comports with constitutional due process.

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

[3] 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).

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).

And the Second Circuit now agrees with those decisions, *see Cunha v. Freden*, No. 25-3141-pr, 2026 WL 1146044 (2d Cir. Apr. 28, 2026). But, as noted, both the Fifth Circuit and Eighth Circuit Courts of Appeals have 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.'"); *Avila*, 170 F.4th at 1134 (concluding that "the structure of § 1225(b)(2)(A) does not indicate that 'seeking admission' is a separate requirement for detention under the statute"). Both courts concluded, correctly, that an "applicant for admission" is "necessarily someone who is 'seeking admission.'" *Buenrostro-Mendez*, 166 F.4th at 503; *Avila*, 170 F.4th at 1135 ("'seeking admission' . . . means virtually the same thing as 'applicant for admission'").

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 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 comports with 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 Court deny the petition for writ of habeas corpus. Respondents further respectfully request that the Court decide this petition on the papers.

Respectfully submitted,

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ORDER

AND NOW, this _____day of_____,2026, upon consideration of the Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus and the Motion for a Temporary Restraining Order and the government's response thereto, it is hereby ORDERED that the petition and motion are DENIED.

BY THE COURT:

_____
Paul S. Diamond, J.

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.

/s/ Peter Carr
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May 5, 2026