UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
COLOMBUS DIVISION

FREDY GUILLERMO ESCOBAR ILLESCAS,

Petitioner,

v.

LADEON FRANCIS, Field Office Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations, ATLANTA Field Office, TODD LYONS, in his official capacity as Acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Immigration and Customs Enforcement; MARK MULLIN, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY; TODD BLANCHE, U.S. Attorney General; EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW; JASON STREEVAL, Warden of STEWART DETENTION CENTER,

Respondents.

Case No. 4:26-cv-968

PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS

INTRODUCTION

1. Petitioner, FREDY GUILLERMO ESCOBAR ILLESCAS (A[redacted]), is in the physical custody of Respondents at the STEWART DETENTION CENTER. He now faces unlawful detention because the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in direct collaboration with the adjudicative body with jurisdiction over immigrants (the Executive Office of Immigration Review) (EOIR) have concluded Petitioner is subject to mandatory detention.

2. Upon information and belief, Petitioner is charged with, inter alia, having entered the United States without admission or inspection. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(A)(i).

3. Based on this allegation in Petitioner's removal proceedings, DHS has prevented Petitioner's 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. On May 15, 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 [noncitizen] apprehended shortly after entering the U.S. without inspection and that such persons are subject to mandatory detention under INA section 235 (b). *Matter of Q Li*, 29 I&N Dec. 66 (BIA 2025).

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 previously entered and are now residing 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. More importantly, the Government itself has made an abrupt about-face on this issue. Respondents should be judicially estopped from asserting their current interpretation of 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), because they previously prevailed in litigation after asserting the opposite interpretation. As explained in *New Hampshire v. Maine*, 532 U.S. 742 (2001), judicial estoppel applies when a party assumes a position in a legal proceeding, succeeds in maintaining that position, and then adopts a contrary position in a subsequent proceeding to gain an unfair advantage. Here, Respondents previously, and successfully, argued that individuals who entered the United States without inspection were subject to detention under § 1226(a), and not § 1225(b)(2)(A), and courts accepted that position. Respondents now reverse course and assert that such individuals are subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A), thereby denying them bond hearings. This shift in legal position undermines the integrity of the judicial process and imposes an unfair detriment on Petitioners who relied on the prior interpretation. Accordingly, Respondents should be estopped from asserting this inconsistent position.

8. 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.

JURISDICTION

9. Petitioner is in the physical custody of Respondents. Petitioner is detained at the STEWART DETENTION CENTER in LUMPKIN, GEORGIA.

10. 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).

11. 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

12. 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 MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA, the judicial district in which Petitioner currently is detained.

13. 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 MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA.

REQUIREMENTS OF 28 U.S.C. § 2243

14. 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.*

15. 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

16. Petitioner FREDY GUILLERMO ESCOBAR ILLESCAS ("Mr. Escobar") is a citizen of Guatemala who has been in immigration detention since early May of 2026. 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 Q. Li* (29 I&N Dec. 66). Due to this erroneous decision, it would be futile for Petitioner to apply to EOIR without the intervention of this honorable Court.

17. Respondent Todd Lyons is named in his official capacity as the Acting Director of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"). As the senior Official Performing the duties of the Director of ICE, he is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the immigration laws of the United States; routinely transacts business in the Southern District of Georgia; is legally responsible for any effort to detain Petitioner; and as such is a custodian of the Petitioner. His address is ICE, Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, 500 12th St. SW, Mail Stop 5900, Washington DC 20536-5900.

18. Respondent Ladeon Francis is the Director of the Atlanta Field Office of ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations division; however, on information and belief, the DHS is rotating their Field Office Director without publishing a schedule of rotation. As such, Ladeon Francis or his unknown, unannounced provisional replacement is Petitioner's immediate custodian and is responsible for Petitioner's detention and removal. He or his

acting counterpart is named in his or her official capacity. Respondent Francis's address is 180 Ted Turner Dr Se, Ste 522. Atlanta GA 30303.

19. Respondent Mark Mullin is the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. He is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), and oversees ICE, which is responsible for Petitioner's detention. Secretary Mullin has ultimate custodial authority over Petitioner and is sued in his official capacity.

20. Respondent Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the federal agency responsible for implementing and enforcing the INA, including the detention and removal of noncitizens.

21. Respondent Todd Blanche is the Attorney General of the United States. He 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. He is sued in his official capacity. Respondent Blanches's address is U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of the General Counsel, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20530-0001.

22. Respondent Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) is the federal agency responsible for implementing and enforcing the INA in removal proceedings, including for custody redeterminations in bond hearings.

23. Respondent, Warden Jason Streeval is, is employed by the private, for-profit detention corporation contracted by the Government as an agent to confine immigrants at Stewart Detention Center, where Petitioner is detained. He has immediate physical custody of Petitioner. He is sued in his official capacity. Respondent Warden's address is Warden, Stewart Detention Center, 1116 S Washington Ave, Lumpkin, GA 39862.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

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

25. 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).

26. 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).

27. 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).

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

29. 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).

30. Following the 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).

31. 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)).

32. In *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) explicitly acknowledged that individuals who have already entered the United States and are not apprehended within 100 miles of the border or within 14 days of entry are subject to discretionary detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), not mandatory detention under § 1225(b). During oral argument on November 30, 2016, then–Solicitor General Ian Gershengorn stated: "If they are not detained within 100 miles of the border or within 14 days… then they are under 1226(a) and not 1226(c)" and further clarified, in response to a question concerning "an alien who has come into the United States illegally without being admitted [and] who takes up residence 50 miles from the border," the Government responded, "The answer is they are held under 1226(a) and that they get a bond hearing…" Transcript of Oral Argument at 7–8, *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. ___ (2018) (No. 15-1204). DHS reiterated that such individuals "would be held under 1226(a)" and cited the administrative record to support that position. *Id.* These statements reflect DHS's prior litigation stance that § 1226(a) governs detention for noncitizens who have entered and are residing in the United States, a position directly contrary to the agency's current interpretation applying § 1225(b)(2)(A) to such individuals. Having prevailed in *Jennings* after taking this position, they should be estopped from taking the contrary position now simply because their political or litigation interests have changed. Estoppel in this case is necessary to preserve

the predictability inherent in the rule of law and due process under the Fifth Amendment, as well as to protect the integrity of the judicial system.

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

34. 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.

35. 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 United States without admission or parole are subject to detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A) and are ineligible for IJ bond hearings. *Matter of Yahure Hurtado*, 29 I&N Dec. 216 (BIA 2025).

36. Likewise, the Board has held in *Matter of Q Li* that those who were apprehended at the border shortly after entering the U.S, released, and then re-detained years later are also subject to mandatory detention. *Matter of Q. LI,* 29 I&N Dec. 66 (BIA 2025).

37. Since Respondents adopted their new policies, several federal courts have rejected their new interpretation of the INA's detention authorities.

38. This Court has held in similar cases that petitioners present in the United Stated at the time of their detention, who have not been lawfully admitted and are not attempting to be lawfully admitted, like the Petitioner, are subject to detention under INA § 1226(a). *J.A.M.*

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

v. Streeval, No. 4:25-CV342-CDL, 2025 WL 3050094 (M.D. Ga. Nov. 1, 2025). *P.R.S. v. Streeval*, No. 4:25-cv-330-CDL, 2025 WL 3269947 (M.D. Ga Nov. 24, 2025).

39. Moreover, on May 6, 2026, the Eleventh Circuit issued a published decision in *Alvarez v. Warden, Federal Detention Center Miami, et al.,* No. 25-14065 (11th Cir. 2026) and *Perez v. Assistant Field Office Director, Krome North Service Processing Center, et al.*, (No. 25-14075 (11th Cir. 2026), holding that INA § 1226 applies to unadmitted noncitizens apprehended within the interior of the United States, thereby entitling such individuals to bond hearings. The court further held that unadmitted noncitizens encountered in the interior rather than at the border and not actively seeking lawful admission are subject to detention under § 1226. However, this decision has not resulted in actual release nor actual bond hearings for detainees in similar circumstances to the Petitioner whom where apprehended upon entry to the United States, released on their own recognizance or parole, and then later re-apprehended in the interior. This demonstrates that judicial intervention is necessary to remedy Petitioner's ongoing unlawful detention.

FACTS

40. Mr. Escobar has resided in the United States since March 25, 2019, and currently resides physically in Lumpkin, Georgia, where he is detained.

41. Upon his entry into the United States, the DHS released respondent into the United States pursuant to humanitarian parole, placed him on an Intensive Supervision Appearance Program (ISAP), and placed him into removal proceedings.

42. The DHS filed a Notice to Appear with EOIR alleging that Petitioner entered the United States without inspection.

43. Mr. Escobar filed his form I-589 application for asylum and withholding of removal with the Immigration Court and obtained lawful work authorization through May 13, 2029.

44. In early May of 2026, Mr. Escobar was stopped for a minor traffic violation and subsequently arrested by ICE officials.

45. Mr. Escobar was then transferred to the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin Georgia

46. Mr. Escobar without being presented in front of an immigration judge was processed as having requested voluntary departure and processed for voluntary departure despite never having requested voluntary departure.

47. Mr. Escobar through undersigned counsel requested re-opening of his proceeding due to the error committed by the Immigration court.

48. Mr. Escobar is now located at the Stewart Detention Center where he remains detained.

49. Pursuant to *Matter of Q Li*, the immigration judge is unable to consider Ms. Escobar's bond request, and his unlawful detention cannot be litigated before that body, who collaborated with the DHS – who is a party to these contested proceedings – to adopt the DHS position wholesale, because such efforts would be futile.

50. As a result, Mr. Escobar remains in detention. Without relief from this court, he faces the prospect of months, or even years, in immigration custody, separated from his family and community while his relief remains pending.

CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

COUNT I
Violation of the INA

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

52. 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 received an I-220A and who were subsequently accused by DHS of having "entered" the United States. Those actions by DHS, followed by the Petitioner's concession to those charges before EOIR, represent a quasi-judicial determination by an agency which precludes further litigation of the issue unless new, material, and previously unavailable facts emerge. Such noncitizens continue to be detained under § 1226(a), unless they are subject to § 1225(b)(1), § 1226(c), or § 1231.

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

COUNT II
Violation of the Bond Regulations

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

55. In 1997, after Congress amended the INA through IIRIRA, EOIR and the then-Immigration and Naturalization Service issued an interim rule to interpret and apply IIRIRA. Specifically, under the heading of "Apprehension, Custody, and Detention of [Noncitizens]," the agencies explained that "[d]espite being applicants for admission, [noncitizens] who are present without having been admitted or paroled (formerly referred to as [noncitizens] who entered without inspection) will be eligible for bond and bond redetermination." 62 Fed. Reg. at 10323 (emphasis added). The agencies thus made clear that individuals who had entered without inspection were eligible for consideration for

bond and bond hearings before IJs under 8 U.S.C. § 1226 and its implementing regulations.

56. Nonetheless, pursuant to *Matter of Yajure Hurtado and Matter of Q Li*, EOIR has a policy and practice of applying § 1225(b)(2) to individual like Petitioner.

57. The application of § 1225(b)(2) to Petitioner unlawfully mandates his continued detention and violates 8 C.F.R. §§ 236.1, 1236.1, and 1003.19.

COUNT III
Violation of Due Process

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

59. 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).

60. Petitioner has a fundamental interest in liberty and being free from official restraint.

61. The government's detention of Petitioner without a bond redetermination hearing to determine whether he is a flight risk or danger to others violates [his/her/their] right to due process.

Judicial Estoppel

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

63. The Government is judicially estopped from asserting that Petitioner is subject to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). In prior litigation, including *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, the Government successfully argued that individuals who

entered without inspection and were not apprehended near the border or within 14 days were subject to discretionary detention under § 1226(a), not mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2)(A). See *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, No. 15-1204, Tr. of Oral Arg. at 7–8 (Nov. 30, 2016). Courts accepted that position. Now, the Government reverses course and asserts the opposite interpretation to deny bond hearings. Under *New Hampshire v. Maine*, 532 U.S. 742 (2001), judicial estoppel applies where a party assumes a position, prevails, and then adopts a contrary position to gain an unfair advantage. The Government's reversal undermines the integrity of the judicial process and prejudices Petitioners who relied on the prior interpretation.

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 Middle District of Georgia 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 or, in the alternative, provide Petitioner with a bond hearing pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) 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 25th day of June, 2026.

/s/ Peter Tadeo, Esq
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28 U.S.C. § 2242 VERIFICATION STATEMENT

I am submitting this verification on behalf of the Petitioner because I am the Petitioner's attorney. I have discussed with Petitioner's family members and have reviewed various documents for Petitioner. On the basis of those discussions, I hereby verify that I have reviewed the foregoing Petition and that the facts and statements made in this Petition and Complaint are true and correct to the best of my knowledge or belief pursuant to 28 USC § 2242.

DATED this 25th day of June, 2026.

/s/ *Peter Tadeo*, **Esq.**
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