

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
KENTUCKY, NORTHERN DIVISION AT COVINGTON

Weichao Yang v. Jason Maydak, et al.

Weichao Yang v. Jason Maydak, No. 2:26-cv-00116-DLB (E.D. Ky. Apr. 2, 2026) · No. No. 2:26-cv-00116-DLB
· Decided April 2, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky grants Weichao Yang’s petition for a writ of habeas corpus challenging his detention without a bond hearing. The court holds that Yang’s detention is governed by 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), rather than the mandatory-detention provision in § 1225(b)(2)(A), because he was already present in the United States and was not seeking admission. The court concludes that Yang is entitled to due process, including a meaningful bond hearing before an immigration judge.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky, Northern Division at Covington
WRITING FOR THE COURT	David L. Bunning
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky, Northern Division at Covington
DECIDED	April 2, 2026
DOCKET	No. 2:26-cv-00116-DLB
DISPOSITION	writ_granted
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 challenging immigration detention without a bond hearing.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court independently interpreted the applicable immigration-detention statutes and applied the three-part Mathews v. Eldridge balancing test to the due-process claim.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Weichao Yang v. Jason Maydak, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Todd Lyons, Kristi Noem, Pamela Bondi

TOPICS

immigration detention

removal proceedings

due process

statutory interpretation

habeas corpus

PRACTICE AREAS

immigration law

habeas corpus

constitutional law

statutory interpretation

administrative law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Yang's detention was governed by the mandatory-detention provisions of 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2) (A) or the bond-hearing framework of 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a).
2. Whether detention without an individualized bond hearing violated Yang's Fifth Amendment due-process rights.
3. Whether habeas relief should be granted by ordering Yang's release or a bond hearing.

HOLDINGS

1. Section 1225(b)(2)(A) does not mandate detention without bond for a noncitizen who is already present in the United States, is not an arriving alien, and is not actively seeking admission. Yang's detention is governed by 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a).
2. Yang's detention without an individualized bond hearing violated his Fifth Amendment due-process rights.
3. The petition for a writ of habeas corpus was granted, and respondents were ordered either to immediately release Yang or provide him with a bond hearing under § 1226(a) within seven days.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Because Yang is neither an “arriving alien” nor “seeking admission” into the United States, the mandatory detention provisions contained § 1225(b)(2) do not apply to him.” (Section III.B)

“The plain language of the statutes, the overall structure, the intent of Congress, and over 30 years of agency action make clear that Section 1226(a) is the appropriate statutory framework ... for noncitizens who are already in the country and facing removal.” (Section III.B)

“As other courts have concluded, Yang's detention without a bond hearing violates the due process rights afforded to him by the Fifth Amendment and he is therefore entitled to an individualized custody determination.” (Section III.C)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Yang, a Chinese citizen, entered the United States without inspection near Tecate, California, on or about July 2, 2024. DHS served him with a Notice to Appear, released him on his own recognizance under § 1226, and later took him into ICE custody during a December 29, 2025 check-in appointment. He remained detained without bond at the Boone County Jail while his asylum application and removal proceedings were pending.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Yang filed a § 2241 habeas petition on March 16, 2026, alleging that his detention without a bond hearing violated the Immigration and Nationality Act and the Fifth Amendment. The respondents filed responses, Yang filed a reply, and the district court granted the petition, ordering his immediate release or, alternatively, a bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within seven days.

DISPOSITION

writ_granted

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Respondents must immediately release Yang or provide him with a bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within seven days of the order. Respondents must file a status report by April 16, 2026 certifying compliance and stating when the hearing occurred, whether bond was granted or denied, and, if denied, the reasons for denial.

CASES CITED

- *Munaf v. Geren*, 553 U.S. 674 (2008)
- *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507 (2004)
- *Rasul v. Bush*, 542 U.S. 466 (2004)
- *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*, 603 U.S. 369 (2024)
- *Walters v. Metro Educational Enterprises, Inc.*, 519 U.S. 202 (1997)
- *Roberts v. Sea-Land Services, Inc.*, 566 U.S. 93 (2012)
- *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281 (2018)
- *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-cv-12486, 2025 WL 2496379 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025)
- *Dubin v. United States*, 599 U.S. 110 (2023)
- *J.G.O. v. Francis*, No. 25-cv-7233, 2025 WL 3040142 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 28, 2025)
- *Maldonado v. Olson*, No. 25-cv-3142, 2025 WL 2374411 (D. Minn. Aug. 15, 2025)
- *Diaz v. Marinez*, 792 F. Supp. 3d 211 (D. Mass. 2025)
- *Edahi v. Lewis*, No. 4:25-cv-129-RGJ, 2025 WL 3466682 (W.D. Ky. Nov. 27, 2025)
- *Sanchez v. Mayorkas*, 593 U.S. 409 (2021)
- *Star Athletica, LLC v. Varsity Brands, Inc.*, 580 U.S. 405 (2017)
- *Castañon-Nava v. U.S. Department of Homeland Security*, 161 F.4th 1048 (7th Cir. 2025)
- *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678 (2001)
- *Leng May Ma v. Barber*, 357 U.S. 185 (1958)
- *Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California*, 591 U.S. 1 (2020)
- *Stone v. I.N.S.*, 514 U.S. 386 (1995)
- *Marx v. General Revenue Corp.*, 568 U.S. 371 (2013)
- *Abramski v. United States*, 573 U.S. 169 (2014)
- *Buenrostro-Mendez v. Bondi*, No. 25-20496, 2026 WL 323330 (5th Cir. Feb. 6, 2026)

- Avila v. Bondi, No. 25-3248, 2026 WL 819258 (8th Cir. Mar. 25, 2026)
- Wright v. Spaulding, 939 F.3d 695 (6th Cir. 2019)
- Mathews v. Eldridge, 424 U.S. 319 (1976)
- Foucha v. Louisiana, 504 U.S. 71 (1992)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY NORTHERN DIVISION AT COVINGTON CIVIL ACTION NO. 26-116-DLB WEICHAO YANG PETITIONER v. MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER JASON MAYDAK, et al., RESPONDENTS * * * * * I. INTRODUCTION This matter is before the Court on Petitioner Weichao Yang’s Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus (Doc. # 1). Respondents¹ having filed their Responses² (Docs. # 7 and 8), and Petitioner having filed his Reply (Doc. # 9) this matter is now ripe for review.

For the following reasons, the Court will grant the Petition. II. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND Weichao Yang is a native and citizen of China. (Doc. # 1 ¶ 39). On or about July 2, 2024, Yang unlawfully entered the United States without inspection near Tecate, California. (Id. ¶ 41). Shortly thereafter, Yang was detained by immigration officials. 1 Petitioner files this action against Jason Maydak, Warden, Boond County Jail; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”); U.S. Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”); Todd Lyons, Acting Director of ICE; Kristi Noem, Secretary of DHS; and Pamela Bondi, Attorney General of the United States.

2 Although Yang filed a Reply on March 31, 2026 (Doc. # 9) addressing the Response filed by Respondents Bondi, Lyons, and Noem (Doc. # 7), Petitioner did not address the arguments raised by Respondent Maydak in his Response (Doc. # 8). Maydak argues that he is not Yang’s immediate custodian and, as a result, contends that he is an improper respondent. (Id. at 9).

This is uncontested by Yang. Therefore, the Court will address only the Response filed by Respondents Bondi, Lyons, and Noem (Doc. # 7). (Doc. # 1 ¶ 2). At that time, DHS served Yang with a Notice to Appear before an Immigration Judge (“IJ”) for removal proceedings. (Doc. # 7-2 at 1). Also on July 2, 2024, DHS released Yang into the United States on his own recognizance.

(Doc. # 7-4 at 1). Yang has also applied for asylum, and his application is currently pending. (Doc. # 1 ¶ 6). On December 29, 2025 Yang attended a check-in appointment with ICE in New York City. (Id.). At this meeting, ICE took Yang into detention. (Id.). Since this arrest, Yang has remained in ICE custody and he is currently detained without bond at the Boone County Jail in Burlington, Kentucky.

(Id. ¶ 17-18). On March 16, 2026, Yang filed the instant Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241. (Id.). In his Petition, Yang argues that he is unlawfully detained at the Boone County Jail and requests that the Court order his immediate release. (Id. at 20).

On March 18, 2026, the Court directed Respondents to respond to Yang's Petition. (Doc. # 5). Respondents having filed their Responses (Docs. # 7 and 8), and Yang has filed his Reply (Doc. # 9). Accordingly, this matter is ripe for the Court's review. III. ANALYSIS Yang's Petition alleges that his present detention without a bond hearing deprives him of his right to due process under the Fifth Amendment.³ (Doc. # 1 ¶¶ 64-68).

Specifically, Yang contends that his detention is unlawful and therefore requests that the Court order his immediate release. (Id.). ³ Yang also asserts two claims under the Administrative Procedure Act ("APA"). (Id. ¶¶ 51- 63). Respondents argue that Yang's APA claims may not proceed in combination with Yang's habeas corpus claims. (Doc. # 7 at 9).

Because the Court, for the reasons that follow, finds that Yang is entitled to relief under the Fifth Amendment, the Court need not address whether the APA affords him the same relief. A. Relevant Framework At its core, habeas provides "a remedy for unlawful executive detention." *Munaf v. Geren*, 553 U.S. 674, 693 (2008). And this remedy is available to "every individual detained within the United States." *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507, 525 (2004).

A district court may grant a writ of habeas corpus to any person who shows that he is detained within the court's jurisdiction in violation of the Constitution or laws or treaties of the United States. 28 U.S.C. § 2241(c)(3).

The Supreme Court has recognized that habeas relief extends to noncitizens. See *Rasul v. Bush*, 542 U.S. 466, 483 (2004) ("[Alien] Petitioners contend that they are being held in federal custody in violation of the laws of the United States... Section 2241, by its terms, requires nothing more."). Enacted in 1952, the Immigration and Nationality Act ("INA") consolidated previous immigration and nationality laws and now contains "many of the most important provisions of immigration law." U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Immigration and Nationality Act (July 10, 2019), <https://www.uscis.gov/lawsandpolicy/legislation/immigrationandnationalityact#:~:text=The%20Immigration%20and%20Nationality%20Act,the%20U.S.%20House%20of%20Representatives>.

Relevant to Yang's Petition, Congress has established two statutes, codified in Title 8, which govern the detention of noncitizens pending removal proceedings—8 U.S.C. §§ 1225 and 1226. The first statute, 8 U.S.C. § 1225 is titled "Inspection by immigration officers; expedited removal of inadmissible arriving aliens; referral for hearing." It states, in pertinent part: (b) Inspection of applicants for admission (2) Inspection of other aliens (A) In general Subject to subparagraphs (B) and (C), 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 1229(a) of this title.

8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). Important to note, for purposes of this provision, “an alien who is an applicant for admission” is defined as an “alien present in the United States who has not been admitted or who arrives in the United States.” 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1).

The second provision at issue, 8 U.S.C. § 1226, is titled “Apprehension and detention of aliens” and reads: (a) Arrest, detention, and release On a warrant issued by the Attorney General, an alien may be arrested and detained pending a decision on whether the alien is to be removed from the United States. Except as provided in subsection (c) and pending such decision, the Attorney General— (1) May continue to detain the arrested alien; and (2) May release the alien on— (A) Bond of at least \$1,500 with security approved by, and containing conditions prescribed by, the Attorney General....

8 U.S.C. § 1226(a). Section 1226(c) of the INA was amended by Congress in January 2025 with the enactment of the Laken Riley Act, which added a new subsection under Section 1226(c), requiring mandatory detention in certain circumstances. Pub. L. No. 119-1, § 2, 139 Stat. 3, 3 (2025).

The amendment added a two-step process, in which the Attorney General must detain a noncitizen if (1) they are inadmissible because they are in the United States without being admitted or paroled, obtained documents or admission through misrepresentation or fraud, or lacks valid documentation and (2) is charged with, is arrested for, is convicted of, admits having committed, or admits committing acts which constitute the essential elements of any burglary, theft, larceny, shoplifting, or assault of a law enforcement officer offense, or any crime that results in death or serious bodily injury to another person.

Barrera v. Tindall, No. 3:25-cv-541-RGJ, 2025 WL 2690565, at *3 (W.D. Ky. Sep. 19, 2025) (quoting U.S.C. §§ 1226(c)(1)(E)(i)-(ii)). The distinction between 8 U.S.C. §§ 1225 and 1226 lies at the heart of Yang’s Petition. Pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), noncitizens who are arrested and detained have the right to request a bond hearing before an IJ. Conversely, under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A), all aliens deemed to be applicants for admission must be detained without bond.

As noted *supra*, Yang, a noncitizen who has lived in the United States for nearly two years, has been detained by ICE and is being held at the Boone County Jail. The question, then, is whether Yang must be detained without a hearing under § 1225(b)(2), as Respondents contend (Doc. # 7 at 2), or whether he has the right to request a meaningful bond hearing pursuant to § 1226.4 4 The Court notes that the matter before this Court is not whether the executive branch has the authority to direct ICE/DHS to detain and deport noncitizens.

The question before the Court is a narrower one, to wit, whether those noncitizens—specifically Petitioner Yang—are entitled to request a bond hearing before an IJ prior to their removal hearing

pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) or must be mandatorily detained pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1125(b)(2) (A). B. Statutory Interpretation The basic facts of this case are not in dispute.

Rather, the central dispute concerns which statute applies to Yang's detention. Yang argues that he is being detained in the Boone County Jail without bond in violation of the INA and the Fifth Amendment. (Doc. # 1 ¶¶ 67-68). Conversely, Respondents contend that Yang is properly detained pursuant to the mandatory detention scheme of § 1225(b)(2). (Doc. # 7 at 2).

Thus, the Court must determine whether § 1225(b)(2) governs Yang's detention. This determination raises a question of statutory interpretation. In interpreting statutes, district courts must "use every tool at their disposal to determine the best reading of the statute." *Loper Bright Enter. v. Raimondo*, 603 U.S. 369, 400 (2024). Statutes must be given their "ordinary, contemporary, common meaning" *Walters v. Metro Edu.*

Enters., Inc., 519 U.S. 202, 207 (1997), while also being read "in their context and with a view to their place in the overall statutory scheme." *Roberts v. Sea-Land Servs., Inc.*, 566 U.S. 93, 101 (2012). The Court first turns to the plain language of the statute.

The Court begins by looking at the first words one may read—the title. A "[c]ourt gives each and every word meaning, and this includes the title." *Barrera*, 2025 WL 2690565, at *4. While section headings are not dispositive, "they are instructive and provide the Court with the necessary assurance that it is at least applying the right part of the statute in a given circumstance." *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-cv-12486, 2025 WL 2496379, at *8 (E.D.

Mich. Aug. 29, 2025); see also *Dubin v. United States*, 599 U.S. 110, 120-21 (2023) ("This Court has long considered that the title of a statute and the heading of a section are tools available for the resolution of a doubt about the meaning of a statute.") (internal quotations and citations omitted). Section 1225 is titled "Inspection by immigration officers; expedited removal of inadmissible arriving aliens; referral for a hearing[.]" Section 1226 is titled "apprehension and detention of aliens" with a focus on "arrest, detention, and release[.]" Thus, the text of the titles indicate that § 1225 governs "arriving" noncitizens who are presently "seeking admission" into the United States,⁵ while § 1226 focuses on the apprehension and detention of those noncitizens already present in the country.

See *Edahi v. Lewis*, No. 4:25-cv-129-RGJ, 2025 WL 3466682, at *7 (W.D. Ky. Nov. 27, 2025) ("The added word of 'arriving' supports the notion that the statute governs 'arriving' noncitizens, not those present already."). Section 1225(a)(1) states that an "applicant for admission" is "an alien present in the United States who has not been admitted or who arrives in the United States." Under § 1225(b)(2)(A) any applicant for admission who is "seeking admission" and "is not clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to be admitted" must be detained.

The analysis then, is twofold. For a noncitizen to be mandatorily detained under § 1225(b)(2)(A), they must be an applicant for admission who is also seeking admission. Other district courts have acknowledged that this “question is puzzling at first blush. How can an ‘applicant for admission’ not ‘seek admission?’” *J.G.O. v. Francis*, No. 25-cv-7233, 2025 WL 3040142, at *3 (S.D.N.Y.

Oct. 28, 2025). However, this question is answered by looking to the statutory definition. To be an applicant for admission, “[a]ll that’s needed is presence without admission—in other words, it applies to the great number of undocumented immigrants who currently live here.” *Id.* By contrast, seeking admission “might mean 5 This is supported by the text of § 1225, which focuses on limited and specific methods of entry, for example, via “crewman” or “stowaways,” leading to the conclusion that “Section 1225 is much more limited in scope than the United States asserts.” *Barrera*, 2025 WL 2690565, at *4. something more than that—some active desire or process toward admission.” *Id.* One’s status as an “applicant for admission” under the definitional language of § 1225(a)(1) is distinct from the act of “applying for” or “seeking” admission.

Congress provided a clear definition of aliens who are “applicants for admission.” 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1). And this definition turns on an individual’s physical presence in the United States. *Id.* Thus, an alien present in the United States can qualify as an “applicant for admission” under § 1225 without also “seeking admission” by necessity.

Because Yang is neither an “arriving alien” nor “seeking admission” into the United States, the mandatory detention provisions contained § 1225(b)(2) do not apply to him. Respondents disagree with this reading and take the position that merely because Petitioner is an “applicant for admission” according to the INA, he is subject to the mandatory detention provisions of § 1225(b)(2).

(Doc. # 7 at 4). Respondents’ interpretation of § 1225(b)(2)(A), therefore, calls for mandatory detention of every noncitizen present in the United States who has not been lawfully admitted. (See *id.* (“Section 1225 mandates the detention of any ‘applicant for admission’ who cannot show that they are ‘clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to be admitted.’”) (quoting 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A))).

The Court finds this interpretation much too broad. See *Maldonado v. Olson*, No. 25-cv-3142, 2025 WL 2374411, at *12 (D. Minn. Aug. 15, 2025) (“[A]ccepting Respondents’ one-size-fits-all application of 1225(b)(2) to all aliens, with no distinctions, would violate fundamental canons of statutory construction.”).

In reaching this conclusion, Respondents misconstrue, or ignore entirely, the phrase “seeking admission.” They argue that a noncitizen who is merely present in the United States is necessarily also seeking admission. But the use of the present progressive term “seeking” “implies action.” *Barrera*, 2025 WL 2690565 at *4; see also *Diaz v. Martinez*, 792 F. Supp. 3d.

211, 218 (D. Mass. 2025) (“[T]he phrase ‘seeking admission[,]’ [though] undefined in the statute[,] [] necessarily implies some sort of present-tense action.”); Edahi, 2025 WL 3466682 at *8 (“Seeking means ‘to go in search of’ and is synonymous with ‘pursue.’” (quoting Webster’s Dictionary (11th ed. 2024))). Furthermore, the INA defines the term “admission” as “the lawful entry of the alien into the United States after inspection and authorization by an immigration officer.” 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(13)(A) (emphasis added).

Given that the word “entry” is left undefined by the INA, courts interpret it according to its “ordinary, contemporary, common meaning.” *Star Athletica, LLC v. Varsity Brands, Inc.*, 580 U.S. 405, 414 (2017) (internal quotations omitted); see also *Gustafson v. Alloyed Co., Inc.*, 513 U.S. 561, 585 (1995) (Thomas, J., dissenting) (“The canon that we construe a statutory term in accordance with its ordinary or natural meaning applies only in the absence of a statutory definition.” (cleaned up)). “That meaning is ‘entering into... (a country),’ which is ‘[t]o come or go in.’” *J.G.O.*, 2025 WL 3040142, at *3 (quoting Entry, OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (2d ed.

1989); Enter, OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (2d ed. 1989)). Thus, it cannot be said that Yang, a noncitizen who has resided in the United States for nearly two years is “actively seeking admission.” See *id.* (“‘[S]eeking admission’ requires an alien to continue to want to go into the country.

The problem... is that [the petitioner] is already here; you can’t go into a place where you already are.”). Furthermore, seeking lawful status or relief from removal is not the same as “seeking admission.” See *Sanchez v. Mayorkas*, 593 U.S. 409, 415 (2021) (observing that “[l]awful status and admission... are distinct concepts in immigration law: Establishing one does not necessarily establish the other”).

Thus, a noncitizen present in the United States may seek lawful status without simultaneously seeking admission. *Id.* (noting that a noncitizen who received Temporary Protected Status was not therefore constructively admitted to the United States). Numerous district courts, including this Court on several occasions, have come to the same conclusion. See *Barrera*, 2025 WL 2690565, at *4 (“Noncitizens who are present in the country for years, like [petitioner] who has been here 20 years, are not actively ‘seeking admission.’”); *Lopez-Campos*, 2025 WL 2496379, at *7 (“There is no logical interpretation that would find that Lopez-Campos was actively ‘seeking admission’ after having resided here, albeit unlawfully, for twenty-six years.”); *Ochoa Ochoa v. Noem*, No. 25-cv-10865, 2025 WL 2938779, at *6 (N.D.

Ill. Oct. 16, 2025) (“In agreement with other district courts, this court rejects Respondents’ expanded reading of 1225(b)(2) and the term “seeking admission.”). Likewise, the Seventh Circuit has agreed with this reading. *Castañon-Nava v. U.S. Dep. Homeland Sec.*, 161 F.4th 1048, 1061

(7th Cir. 2025) (“[p]ut another way, ‘U.S. immigration law authorizes the Government to detain certain aliens seeking admission into the country under §§ 1225(b)(1) and (b)(2).

It also authorizes the Government to detain certain aliens already in the country pending the outcome of removal proceedings under §§ 1226(a) and (c)’”) (emphasis in original) (quoting *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, 583 U.S. 281, 289 (2018)).

To adopt Respondents’ interpretation of § 1225(b)(2)(A) would render the phrase “seeking admission” “mere surplusage by equating it to ‘applicant for admission.’” *Ochoa Ochoa*, 2025 WL 2938779, at *6; see also *Castañon-Nava*, 161 F.4th at 1061 (noting that such a construction “would render § 1225(b)(2)(A)’s use of the phrase ‘seeking admission’ superfluous, violating one of the cardinal rules of statutory construction”); *J.G.O.*, 2025 WL 3040142, at *3 (“[T]his is just another example of the government’s construction inviting surplusage into the statute.

That Congress chose to include this additional phrase—‘seeking admission’... suggests that it must mean something distinct.”). The Court declines to adopt such an expansive reading of § 1225(b)(2)(A).⁶ The Court now turns to the plain language of § 1226, which controls the “apprehension and detention of aliens.” Section 1226(a) permits a bond hearing if an “alien” who was “arrested and detained” on a “warrant issued by the Attorney General” remains in detention “pending a decision on whether the alien is to be removed from the United States.” The plain meaning of the statute is clear and applicable to Yang—an alien who was arrested and detained by ICE and remains in detention pending removal proceedings.

(See Doc. # 1). This is further bolstered by the record. That § 1225(b)(2)(A) applies to noncitizens seeking admission into the United States while § 1226 applies to those noncitizens who are already present in the United States comports with the broader structure and context of our immigration law. *Castañon- Nava*, 161 F.4th at 161-62. Indeed, “[t]he distinction between an alien who has effected an entry into the United States and one who has never entered runs throughout immigration law.” *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 693 (2001); *Leng May Ma v. Barber*, 357 U.S. 185, 187 (1958) (noting that “our immigration laws have long made a distinction between those aliens who have come to our shores seeking admission... and those 6 The Court notes that in their Response, Respondents repeatedly reference *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, 29 I. & N. Dec.

216 (BIA 2025), an opinion from the Board of Immigration Appeals. (See, e.g. Doc. # 7-5 at 18). Pursuant to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Loper Bright*, courts “need not defer to any agency interpretation of law just because a statute is ambiguous.” 603 U.S. at 412-413. who are within the United States after an entry, irrespective of its legality”) (emphasis added).

Here, on the July 2, 2024, Notice to Appear issued to Petitioner, DHS checked the box labeled “You are an alien present in the United States who has not been admitted or paroled” rather than checking the box labeled “arriving alien.” (Doc. # 7-2 at 1) (emphasis added). This supports this

Court's conclusion and reaffirms the Supreme Court's determination in *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, that § 1226(a) applies to aliens already present in the United States, while § 1225(b)(2)(A) applies to arriving aliens.

583 U.S. at 298, 303. Similarly, when DHS released Yang into the United States on his own recognizance, it did so “[i]n accordance with section [1226] of the Immigration and Nationality Act[.]” (Doc. # 7-4 at 1). And when Yang was re-detained on December 29, 2025, DHS served him with an I-200 arrest warrant pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226. (Doc. # 7-3 at 1). Respondent's new post hoc position that, despite these representations, Yang's arrest and detention are governed by § 1225(b)(2)(A) instead is simply “impermissible.” *Dep't of Homeland Sec. v. Regents of the Univ. of Cal.*, 591 U.S. 1, 22 (2020) (holding that “[t]he basic rule is clear: [a]n agency must defend its actions based on the reasons it gave when it acted,” not on “impermissible post hoc rationalizations”).

Most compelling for this Court is the addition of the Laken Riley Act, signed into law in January 2025. The Laken Riley Act, which was incorporated into § 1226(c), provides that noncitizens who have been charged with, convicted of, or admitted to committing various listed crimes, are subject to mandatory detention. 8 U.S.C. § 1226(c). If, as Respondents argue, Congress had intended for § 1225 to govern all noncitizens who are present in the country, regardless of when or where they were detained, then why did Congress even bother passing that legislation?

If Respondents' reading of § 1225 is correct, then the addition of the Laken Riley Act would be superfluous. The Laken Riley Act added a mandatory detention requirement, “in an otherwise discretionary Section.” *Barrera*, 2025 WL 2690565, at *4.

As other courts have noted, [i]f § 1225(b)(2) already mandated detention of any alien who has not been admitted, regardless of how long they have been here, then adding § 1226(c)(1)(E) to the statutory scheme was pointless and this Court, too, ‘will not find that Congress passed the Laken Riley Act to ‘perform the same work’ that was already covered by § 1225(b)(2).

Lopez-Campos, 2025 WL 2496379, at *8 (quoting *Maldonado*, 2025 WL 237441, at *12); see also *id.* (“Respondents' interpretation of the statutes would render [the Laken Riley Act] superfluous); *Ariza v. Noem*, No. 4:25-cv-165-RGJ, 2025 WL 3722014, at *6 (W.D. Ky. Dec. 23, 2025) (“If Section 1225(b)(2)(A) governed certain noncitizens as the United States claims it does, the Laken Riley Act would have been redundant and unnecessary.”); *Gomes v. Hyde*, No. 1:25-cv-11571, 2025 WL 1869299, at *7 (D.

Mass. July 7, 2025) (“Such an interpretation, which would largely nullify a statute Congress enacted this very year, must be rejected.”); *Martinez v. Hyde*, 792 F. Supp. 3d. 211, 221 (D. Mass. 2025) (“[I]f, as the Government argue[s]... a non-citizen's inadmissibility were alone already

sufficient to mandate detention under section 1225(b)(2)(A), then the 2025 amendment would have no effect.

This is a presumptively dubious result.”); *Selvin Adonay E.M. v. Noem et al*, No. 25-cv-3975, 2025 WL 3157839, at *6 (D. Minn. Nov. 12, 2025) (“the presumption against superfluity is at its strongest because the Court is interpreting two parts of the same statutory scheme, and Congress even amended the statutory scheme this year when it passed the Laken Riley Act.”).

This Court agrees with its sister courts. Respondents fail to elaborate when, if § 1225(b)(2) applies to every single noncitizen’s detention proceeding, § 1226 would ever, if at all, come into play. 7 The Court finds it difficult to conceive of a situation in which Congress would enact an insignificant superfluous statute for no other reason than to add words to the page.

See *Stone v. I.N.S.*, 514 U.S. 386, 397 (1995) (“When Congress acts to amend a statute, we presume it intends its amendment to have real and substantial effect.”); see also *Marx v. Gen. Revenue Corp.*, 568 U.S. 371, 386 (2013) (“[T]he canon against surplusage is strongest when an interpretation would render superfluous another part of the same statutory scheme.”).

Finally, pertinent legislative and enforcement history reinforce the Court’s conclusion. See *Loper Bright*, 603 U.S. at 386 (“[T]he longstanding practice of the Government—like any other interpretive aid—can inform [a court’s] determination of what the law is.”). Enacted in 1952, the INA “distinguished between aliens physically arriving in the United States and those who had entered the Country.” Library of Congress, *Immigration Detention: A Legal Overview* (Sep.

16, 2019), https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45915#_Ref17891326. In 1996, Congress enacted the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (“IIRIRA”) which focused on whether the noncitizen “had been lawfully admitted into the country by immigration authorities.” *Id.* Since the IIRIRA’s enactment “the statutory framework governing detention has largely 7 Respondents make various public policy arguments on why noncitizens who have entered the country without detection should not be treated more favorably than those who entered lawfully.

(See, e.g., Doc. # 7-5 at 56). While valid arguments, the text, as clearly indicated above, “does not currently reflect such public policy considerations.” *Maldonado*, 2025 WL 2374411, at *12. “Rather, such arguments may be made to Congress if Respondents would like to amend or repeal § 1225 or § 1226, but such policy arguments are not reflected in the Laken Riley Act amendment ... passed only a few months ago.” *Id.* remained constant.” *Id.* In applying the INA to detention proceedings, the Government has, for the past thirty years, consistently applied § 1226(a).

It was not until July of 2025 when DHS/ICE announced a new policy, titled “Interim Guidance Regarding Detention Authority for Applicants for Admission” where it deemed all persons who entered the United States without inspection “applicants for admission” under § 1225, that the

Government changed course. U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Detention of Applicants for Admission, (Sep.

18, 2025) <https://www.cbp.gov/document/foia-record/detention-applicants-admission>; see also Lopez-Campos, 2025 WL 2496379 at *5 (“For the past 30 years, the Government has applied Section 1226(a)[.]” It is only “now that... they want the Court to declare that the application of Section 1226(a) is incorrect.”). This sudden change contradicted the long- established understanding that § 1225(b) “applies primarily to aliens seeking entry into the United States” while § 1226(a) “applies to aliens already present in the United States.” Jennings, 583 U.S. at 298, 303; see also id. at 288 (“Section 1226(a) sets out the default rule for those aliens [already present in the United States.]”).

Thus, the enforcement history reflects a longstanding practice of applying § 1226(a) to noncitizens already residing in the country, which is “powerful evidence that interpreting [the INA] in that way is natural and reasonable[.]” *Abramski v. U.S.*, 573 U.S. 169, 202-203 (2014) (Scalia, J., dissenting). “The plain language of the statutes, the overall structure, the intent of Congress, and over 30 years of agency action make clear that Section 1226(a) is the appropriate statutory framework ... for noncitizens who are already in the country and facing removal.” Lopez-Campos, 2025 WL 2496397, at *5.

Therefore, the Court finds that Petitioner is not subject to § 1225(b)(2)(A). Rather, the facts of the case make clear that his detention is governed by § 1226(a).⁸ C. Due Process Because the Court has concluded that § 1226(a) is the appropriate statutory framework to apply to Yang, the Court must now determine whether his present detention violates his due process rights.

Respondents contend that Yang is not entitled to any more due process than Congress has authorized. (Doc. # 7 at 7). And because Respondents insist that Yang’s detention is mandatory under § 1225(b)(2)(A), they conclude that he is receiving all the process he is due. (Id.).

However, as discussed above, Yang’s detention is governed by § 1226(a). The Fifth Amendment provides, in pertinent part, that no person shall be “deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law[.]” U.S. Const. amend.

V. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the Due Process Clause extends to all persons, regardless of citizenship status. See *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.” (quoting *Trump v. J.G.G.*, 604 U.S. 670, 673 (2025))).

To determine ⁸ The Court acknowledges that the Fifth and Eighth Circuit Courts of Appeals have reached the opposite conclusion. *Buenrostro-Mendez v. Bondi*, No. 25-20496, 2026 WL 323330 (5th Cir. Feb. 6, 2026); *Avila v. Bondi*, No. 25-3248, 2026 WL 819258 (8th Cir. Mar. 25, 2026).

However, these decisions provide, at most, persuasive authority. See *Wright v. Spaulding*, 939 F.3d 695, 699 (6th Cir. 2019) (noting that holdings of other circuit courts of appeals do not bind courts in the Sixth Circuit). And another Circuit Court has disagreed with the Fifth and Eighth Circuits’ reasoning—albeit in a different procedural context. See *Buenrostro*, 2026 WL 323330, at *4 n. 8 (recognizing the Seventh Circuit’s conflicting decision in *Castañon-Nava v. U.S. Dep’t. of Homeland Sec.*, 161 F.4th 1048 (7th Cir.

2025)). The Sixth Circuit is poised to take up the statutory interpretation issue raised by Petitioner in *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, Case No. 25-1965 (6th Cir. Oct. 27, 2025). Indeed, the Sixth Circuit held oral arguments in *Lopez-Campos* on March 18, 2026 pursuant to an expedited schedule. See Doc. # 42, No. 25-1965.

In the absence of an authoritative decision from the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Court respectfully declines to adopt the Fifth Circuit’s holding in *Buenrostro-Mendez* or the Eighth Circuit’s holding in *Avila*. whether a detainee’s due process rights have been violated, courts apply a three-part balancing test to weigh (1) the private interest that will be affected by the official action; (2) the risk of an erroneous deprivation of such interest through the procedures used, and the probable value, if any, of additional or substitute procedural safeguards; and (3) the United States’ interest, including the function involved and the fiscal and administrative burdens that the additional or substitute procedural requirement would entail.

Mathews v. Eldridge, 424 U.S. 319, 321 (1976). It is undisputed that Yang has a cognizable liberty interest in avoiding detention. See *Hamdi*, 542 U.S. at 531 (affirming “the fundamental nature of a citizen’s right to be free from involuntary confinement by his own government without due process of law[.]”). Indeed, “[f]reedom from bodily restraint has always been at the core of the liberty protected by the Due Process Clause[.]” *Foucha v. Louisiana*, 504 U.S. 71, 80 (1992).

Second, the risk of erroneous deprivation of that interest is high if Yang is not afforded a bond hearing. See *Edahi*, 2025 WL 3466682, at *14 (holding that detention “without any individualized assessment, leads to a high risk of erroneous deprivation of an individual’s liberty interest”) (citation omitted); *Yao v. Almodovar*, No. 25-cv-9982 (PAE), 2025 WL 3653433, at *11 (S.D.N.Y.

Dec. 17, 2025) (finding that ICE’s “discretion-free detention of [the petitioner] abridged his rights under [8 U.S.C.] § 1226 and violated due process”) (citations omitted). As to the third factor, Respondents have not put forth any argument whatsoever advocating for the United States’ interest.

The Court, on its own, concludes that the United States likely has a strong interest in immigration proceedings, but certainly, the “existing statutory and regulatory safeguards” which this Court discussed at length about above, “serve the governmental interest in public safety.” *Barrera*, 2025 WL 2690565, at *7 (quoting *Günaydin v. Trump*, No. 25-cv-01151, 2025 WL 1459154, at *10 (D.

Minn. May 21, 2025)). Accordingly, all three factors weigh in Yang's favor. As other courts have concluded, Yang's detention without a bond hearing violates the due process rights afforded to him by the Fifth Amendment and he is therefore entitled to an individualized custody determination. IV. CONCLUSION Accordingly, for the reasons stated herein, IT IS ORDERED as follows: (1) Petitioner's Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus (Doc. # 1) is GRANTED; (2) | Respondents are ORDERED to immediately release Petitioner, or in the alternative, provide him with a bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. 1226(a) within seven (7) days of the date of this Order; and (3) Respondents shall file a Status Report with this Court on or before April 16, 2026, to certify compliance with this Order.

The Status Report shall include when the bond hearing occurred, whether bond was granted or denied, and if denied, the reasons for that denial. This 2nd day of April, 2026. Se A Signed By: 5
□ □ ene i > David L. Bunning DB Chief United States District Judge G:\Judge-DLB\DATA\ORDERS\Cov2026\26-116 MOO re Habeas Petition.docx 18