

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA, FORT MYERS DIVISION

Roberto Camara Sanchez v. Warden, Alligator Detention Center, U.S.
Attorney General

No. 2:26-cv-283-KCD-DNF, United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Fort Myers Division
(February 17, 2026)

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida dismissed without prejudice a habeas petition filed under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 by Ines Fernandez on behalf of detained Roberto Camara Sanchez. The court held that Fernandez had not established next-friend standing and, alternatively, could not represent Sanchez because she was not alleged to be an attorney.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Fort Myers Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Kyle C. Dudek
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Fort Myers Division
DECIDED	February 17, 2026
DOCKET	2:26-cv-283-KCD-DNF
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Ines Fernandez filed a petition for writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 on behalf of Roberto Camara Sanchez, an immigration detainee. The district court dismissed the petition without prejudice because Fernandez did not establish next-friend standing and could not represent Sanchez pro se.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	Roberto Camara Sanchez v. Warden, Alligator Detention Center, U.S. Attorney General

TOPICS

- federal habeas corpus
- immigration detention
- standing
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

immigration law

federal habeas corpus

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Fernandez established standing as Sanchez's next friend to initiate a habeas petition on his behalf.
2. Whether Fernandez could represent Sanchez in the action without being a licensed lawyer or appearing through counsel.

HOLDINGS

1. A would-be next friend must adequately explain why next-friend designation is necessary and show dedication to the interests of the real party. Fernandez failed to satisfy that standard because she alleged neither Sanchez's mental incompetence nor his lack of access to the courts and provided no other basis for special protection. She therefore lacked standing to initiate the petition on Sanchez's behalf.
2. Even assuming Fernandez had next-friend status, she could not represent Sanchez in the action because she did not claim to be a lawyer and a representative may not appear pro se on behalf of another person.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“At bottom, Fernandez offers nothing to show that Sanchez warrants any special protection by a next friend to litigate on his behalf.”

“Because Fernandez does not demonstrate the propriety of “next friend” status, she lacks standing to initiate this action on Sanchez’s behalf.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Sanchez was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. His spouse, Ines Fernandez, filed the § 2241 petition on his behalf. The petition did not allege that Sanchez was mentally incompetent or denied access to the courts, and Fernandez offered no facts showing that Sanchez required the special protection of a next friend. Fernandez also did not claim to be a lawyer.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Fernandez initiated a § 2241 habeas action on Sanchez's behalf. The court concluded that she failed to demonstrate that next-friend status was necessary and therefore lacked standing to initiate the action. The court also held that, even if next-friend status existed, Fernandez could not represent Sanchez because she was not alleged to be a lawyer. The petition was dismissed without prejudice, pending motions were terminated as moot, and the case was closed.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Whitmore v. Arkansas, 495 U.S. 149, 162-63 (1990)
- Francis v. Warden, FCC Coleman-USP, 246 F. App'x 621, 622 (11th Cir. 2007)
- Weber v. Garza, 570 F.2d 511, 514 (5th Cir. 1978)
- Marcia Turner v. Neptune Towing & Recovery, Inc., No. 8:09-CV-1071-T-27AEP, 2011 WL 2981786, at *2 (M.D. Fla. July 22, 2011)
- Bey on behalf of Baxter v. Fla., No. 4:24CV517/MW/ZCB, 2025 WL 351425, at *1 n.2 (N.D. Fla. Jan. 6, 2025)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA FORT MYERS DIVISION ROBERTO CAMARA SANCHEZ, Plaintiff, Case No. 2:26-cv-283-KCD-DNF v. WARDEN, ALLIGATOR DETENTION CENTER, U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL, Defendants. / ORDER Before the Court is a Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus Under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 filed by Ines Fernandez, on behalf of Roberto Camara Sanchez, who is being detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

(Doc. 1.) An “[a]pplication for a writ of habeas corpus shall be in writing signed and verified by the person for whose relief it is intended or by someone acting in his behalf.” 28 U.S.C. § 2242. The latter part of this provision codifies the common law tradition of permitting a “next friend” to litigate on behalf of a person who, because of incompetence, is unable to initiate a habeas action himself.

See Whitmore v. Arkansas, 495 U.S. 149, 162 (1990). But “[n]ext friend’ standing is by no means granted automatically[.]” Id. at 163. To demonstrate “next friend” status is warranted, the would-be next friend must (1) provide an adequate explanation for the necessity of the designation, such as the real party’s mental incompetence or lack of access to the courts and (2) show she is “truly dedicated to the interests” of the real party.

Id. Fernandez has not met this standard. Although Fernandez is Sanchez’s spouse, there is no allegation that Sanchez is mentally incompetent or has been denied access to the courts. Even so, this Court sees numerous pro se petitioners in immigration custody seeking relief who face the same conditions as Sanchez and are able to litigate their petition. At bottom, Fernandez offers nothing to show that Sanchez warrants any special protection by a next friend to litigate on his behalf.

Because Fernandez does not demonstrate the propriety of “next friend” status, she lacks standing to initiate this action on Sanchez’s behalf. See Francis v. Warden, FCC Coleman-USP, 246 F. App'x 621, 622 (11th Cir. 2007) (“Absent ‘next friend’ status, an individual lacks Article III standing to file a petition on another’s behalf, thus stripping the district court of jurisdiction to consider the petition.”); Weber v. Garza, 570 F.2d 511, 514 (5th Cir.

1978) (“[W]hen the application for habeas corpus filed by a would be ‘next friend’ does not set forth an adequate reason or explanation of the necessity for resort to the ‘next friend’ device, the court is without jurisdiction to consider the petition.”). What is more, even if there was next-friend status, Fernandez does not claim to be a lawyer. So she cannot represent Sanchez in this action.

See Weber, 570 F.2d at 514; Marcia Turner v. Neptune Towing & Recovery, Inc., No. 8:09-CV-1071-T-27AEP, 2011 WL 2981786, at *2 (M.D. Fla. July 22, 2011) (“Under Rule 17(c), a representative does not have the right to appear on behalf of a minor or an incompetent person unless that representative is represented by counsel.”); Bey on behalf of Baxter v. Fla. No. 4:24CV517/MW/ZCB, 2025 WL 351425, at *1 n.2 (N.D.

Fla. Jan. 6, 2025). Accordingly, it is ORDERED: 1. The Petition (Doc. 1) is DISMISSED without prejudice. 2. The Clerk shall enter judgment dismissing this case without prejudice, terminate any pending motions as moot, and close the case. 3.

The Clerk is directed to send a copy of this order to Ines Fernandez, 4285 East 9th Lane, Hialeah, FL 33013. ORDERED in Fort Myers, Florida on February 17, 2026. Kyle C. Dudek —«*S
United States District Judge