

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

Saydulaev v. Fields

Civil Action No. 26-112-DLB · No. Civil Action No. 26-112-DLB; 2:26-cv-00112 · Decided May 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The court grants Artur Saydulaev’s pro se petition for a writ of habeas corpus challenging his detention during immigration removal proceedings. It holds that the mandatory-detention provision in 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) does not apply to a noncitizen who has resided in the United States for several years and is not actively seeking admission, and that detention is instead governed by 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), which provides an opportunity for a bond hearing. The opinion addresses statutory text, structure, the Laken Riley Act, and due process considerations.

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	May 6, 2026
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 26-112-DLB; 2:26-cv-00112
DISPOSITION	writ_granted
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 challenging immigration detention without bond or access to a custody hearing.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court liberally construed the pro se habeas petition and interpreted the governing statutes de novo. It applied the Mathews v. Eldridge balancing test to the due-process claim.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court opinion; persuasive authority only
PARTIES	Artur Saydulaev v. Marc Fields, Samuel Olson, Todd M. Lyons, Kristi Noem, Pamela Bondi

TOPICS

immigration detention

removal proceedings

statutory interpretation

procedural due process

due process

PRACTICE AREAS

immigration

immigration detention

habeas corpus

constitutional law

statutory interpretation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Saydulaev's detention was governed by the mandatory-detention provision in 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A) or the discretionary detention and bond-hearing framework in 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a).
2. Whether detention without an individualized bond hearing violated Saydulaev's Fifth Amendment due-process rights.
3. Whether the proper remedy was immediate release or a constitutionally adequate bond hearing at which the government bears the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence.

HOLDINGS

1. Because Saydulaev had entered and resided in the United States for more than three years and was neither an arriving alien nor actively seeking admission, his detention was governed by 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), not the mandatory-detention provision in § 1225(b)(2)(A).
2. Detaining Saydulaev without access to an individualized bond hearing violated his Fifth Amendment right to due process.
3. The proper remedy was an immediate release or, alternatively, a constitutionally adequate bond hearing at which the government must justify continued detention by clear and convincing evidence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Because Saydulaev 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.” (Analysis)

“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.” (Analysis)

“Respondents are ORDERED to immediately release Petitioner, or in the alternative, provide him with a constitutionally adequate bond hearing where the government bears the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within seven (7) days of the date of this Order” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Saydulaev, a Russian citizen, entered the United States in December 2022, was issued an I-94, and was placed in removal proceedings. He later applied for asylum and withholding of removal, appeared at his court hearings, and complied with the conditions of release. ICE arrested him in Chicago in December 2025 and detained him without bond after transferring him to Kentucky; he had not received an individualized custody hearing.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Saydulaev filed a pro se § 2241 petition on March 13, 2026, alleging that his detention violated the Immigration and Nationality Act and the Fifth Amendment. Several respondents filed a response, Saydulaev filed a reply, and the court granted the petition, ordering immediate release or a constitutionally adequate bond hearing within seven days.

DISPOSITION

writ_granted

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Respondents must immediately release Saydulaev or provide a constitutionally adequate bond hearing under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within seven days, with the government bearing the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence. Respondents must file a status report by May 20, 2026 documenting compliance and the outcome of any hearing.

CASES CITED

- *Munaf v. Geren*, 553 U.S. 674, 693 (2008)
- *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507, 525, 531 (2004)
- *Rasul v. Bush*, 542 U.S. 466, 483 (2004)
- *Franklin v. Rose*, 765 F.2d 82, 84-85 (6th Cir. 1985)
- *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972)
- *Burris v. United States*, 430 F.2d 399, 403 (7th Cir. 1970), cert. denied, 401 U.S. 921 (1971)
- *White v. Wyrick*, 530 F.2d 818, 819 (8th Cir. 1976)
- *Barrera v. Tindall*, No. 3:25-cv-541-RGJ, 2025 WL 2690565, at *3-*4, *7 (W.D. Ky. Sept. 19, 2025)
- *Loper Bright Enters. v. Raimondo*, 603 U.S. 369, 386, 400, 412-13 (2024)
- *Walters v. Metro. Educ. Enters., Inc.*, 519 U.S. 202, 207 (1997)
- *Roberts v. Sea-Land Servs., Inc.*, 566 U.S. 93, 101 (2012)
- *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-cv-12486, 2025 WL 2496379, at *5, *7-*8 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025)
- *Dubin v. United States*, 599 U.S. 110, 120-21 (2023)
- *Edahi v. Lewis*, No. 4:25-cv-129-RGJ, 2025 WL 3466682, at *3, *7-*8, *11-*12, *14 (W.D. Ky. Nov. 27, 2025)
- *J.G.O. v. Francis*, No. 25-cv-7233, 2025 WL 3040142, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 28, 2025)
- *Castañon-Nava v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 161 F.4th 1048, 1061-62 (7th Cir. 2025)
- *Sanchez v. Mayorkas*, 593 U.S. 409, 415 (2021)
- *Star Athletica, LLC v. Varsity Brands, Inc.*, 580 U.S. 405, 414 (2017)
- *Gustafson v. Alloyed Co., Inc.*, 513 U.S. 561, 585 (1995) (Thomas, J., dissenting)
- *Maldonado v. Olson*, No. 25-cv-3142, 2025 WL 2374411, at *12 (D. Minn. Aug. 15, 2025)
- *Santos Franco v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-cv-13188, 2025 WL 2977118, at *7 (E.D. Mich. Oct. 21, 2025)
- *Benitez v. Francis*, 795 F. Supp. 3d 475, 488 n.7 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 13, 2025)

- Navarrete v. Noem, No. 4:25-cv-157-DJH, 2025 WL 3298081, at *2 (W.D. Ky. Nov. 26, 2025)
- Ochoa Ochoa v. Noem, No. 25-cv-10865, 2025 WL 2938779, at *6 (N.D. Ill. Oct. 16, 2025)
- Zadvydas v. Davis, 533 U.S. 678, 693 (2001)
- Leng May Ma v. Barber, 357 U.S. 185, 187 (1958)
- Stone v. I.N.S., 514 U.S. 386, 397 (1995)
- Marx v. Gen. Revenue Corp., 568 U.S. 371, 386 (2013)
- Rojas v. Olson, No. 25-cv-1437-bhl, 2025 WL 3033967, at *9 (E.D. Wis. Oct. 30, 2025)
- Mejia Olalde v. Noem, No. 1:25-cv-00168-JMD, 2025 WL 3131942, at *2-*3 (E.D. Mo. Nov. 10, 2025)
- Jennings v. Rodriguez, 583 U.S. 281, 288-89, 298, 303 (2018)
- Abramski v. United States, 573 U.S. 169, 202-03 (2014) (Scalia, J., dissenting)
- Wright v. Spaulding, 939 F.3d 695, 699 (6th Cir. 2019)
- 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)
- Cunha v. Freden, No. 25-3141-pr, 2026 WL 1146044, at *9 (2d Cir. Apr. 28, 2026)
- A.A.R.P. v. Trump, 605 U.S. 91, 94 (2025)
- Trump v. J.G.G., 604 U.S. 670, 673 (2025)
- Foucha v. Louisiana, 504 U.S. 71, 80 (1992)
- Goldberg v. Kelly, 397 U.S. 254, 268 (1970)
- Yao v. Almodovar, No. 25 Civ. 9983 (PAE), 2025 WL 3653433, at *11 (S.D.N.Y. Dec. 17, 2025)
- Günaydin v. Trump, No. 25-cv-01151, 2025 WL 1459154, at *10 (D. Minn. May 21, 2025)
- Hernandez-Lara v. Lyons, 10 F.4th 19, 39 (1st Cir. 2021)
- Velasco Lopez v. Decker, 978 F.3d 842, 846 (2d Cir. 2020)
- Azalyar v. Raycraft, No. 1:25-cv-916, 2026 WL 30741, at *5 (S.D. Ohio Jan. 2, 2026)
- Rajesh v. Barr, 420 F. Supp. 3d 78, 87-88 (W.D.N.Y. Oct. 29, 2019)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY NORTHERN DIVISION AT COVINGTON CIVIL ACTION NO. 26-112-DLB ARTUR SAYDULAEV PETITIONER v. MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER MARC FIELDS et al. RESPONDENTS * * * * * I. INTRODUCTION This matter is before the Court on Petitioner Artur Saydulaev's pro se Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus (Doc. # 1).

Respondents¹ having filed their Response (Doc. # 4) and Petitioner having filed his Reply (Doc. # 7), the matter is now ripe for the Court's review. For the following reasons, the Court will grant the Petition. II. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND Petitioner Artur Saydulaev is a native and citizen of Russia. (Doc. # 1-1 at 1). He entered the United States on or about December 16, 2022, at or near San Luis, Arizona.

(Id. at 4). Shortly after his arrival, Saydulaev was apprehended by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (“CBP”) agents. (Id.). Shortly after being detained by CBP, he was released from custody with an I-94 due to detention capacity. (Id.).

On December 18, 2022, he was issued a Notice to Appear before an immigration judge (“IJ”) for removal proceedings. 1 Petitioner files this action against Samuel Olson, Field Office Director, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”), Chicago Field Office; Todd M. Lyons, Acting Director of ICE; Kristi Noem, Former Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”); Pamela Bondi, Former Attorney General of the United States; and Marc Fields, Warden, Kenton County Detention Facility (collectively, “Respondents”).

(See Doc. # 1). (Id. at 26; Doc. # 4-1). Approximately six months later, Saydulaev applied for asylum and withholding of removal. (Doc. # 1-1 at 13–24). His asylum application is pending before the Memphis Immigration Court and his individual hearing in that matter is scheduled for June 5, 2026. (Doc. # 1 at 6). Prior to his arrest, he lived in Chicago, appeared at all court hearings and complied with all conditions of his release.

(Id.). Saydulaev was arrested by ICE agents in Chicago on December 16, 2025. (Id.). He was detained without bond in Chicago before being transferred to Kenton County, Kentucky, where he remains in DHS custody. (Id.). He is currently detained without bond or the ability to request a custody hearing. (Id. at 7). Saydulaev filed his pro se Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus on March 13, 2026.

(Doc. # 1). On March 17, 2026, this Court directed Respondents to respond to the Petition. (Doc. # 3). Respondents Olson, Lyons, Noem and Bondi filed their Response on March 31, 2026 (Doc. # 4), while Respondent Fields did not file a Response.

On April 27, 2026, Saydulaev filed a Motion for Extension of Time to file a Reply. (Doc. # 5). This Court granted his Motion and set his Reply deadline for May 5, 2026. (Doc. # 6). On May 4, 2026, Petitioner filed his Reply. (Doc. # 7).

Accordingly, this matter is ripe for the Court’s review. III. ANALYSIS Saydulaev’s Petition alleges that his present detention violates the Immigration and Nationality Act (“INA”) and deprives him of his right to due process under the Fifth Amendment. (Doc. # 1 at 6–7). Specifically, he contends that he is entitled to immediate release or, alternatively, a bond hearing at which the Government is required to justify his detention as necessary by clear and convincing evidence.

(Id. at 7). 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 relief 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.”).

Because Saydulaev is not represented by counsel, the Court holds his Petition to a less stringent standard than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers—“however inartfully pleaded” his allegations may be. *Franklin v. Rose*, 765 F.2d 82, 84-85 (6th Cir. 1985) (quoting *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972)). “The allegations of a pro se habeas petition, ‘though vague and conclusory, are entitled to a liberal construction.’” *Id.* at 85 (quoting *Burris v. United States*, 430 F.2d 399, 403 (7th Cir.

1970), cert. denied, 401 U.S. 921 (1971)). This construction “requires active interpretation in some cases to construe a pro se petition ‘to encompass any allegation stating federal relief.’” *Id.* (quoting *White v. Wyrick*, 530 F.2d 818, 819 (8th Cir. 1976)). Enacted in 1952, the 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%20Rep](https://www.uscis.gov/lawsandpolicy/legislation/immigrationandnationalityact#:~:text=The%20Immigration%20and%20Nationality%20Act,the%20U.S.%20House%20of%20Representatives)resentatives.

Relevant to Saydulaev's Petition, Congress has established two statutes, codified in Title 8, which govern 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 Saydulaev’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.

As noted *supra*, Saydulaev, a noncitizen who has lived in the United States since 2022, has been detained by ICE and is being held at the Kenton County Detention Center. The question, then, is whether Saydulaev must be detained without a hearing under § 1225(b)(2), as Respondents contend, or whether he has the right to request a meaningful bond hearing pursuant to § 1226.2 B. Statutory Interpretation The Parties agree on the basic facts of this case.

(See Doc. # 4 at 1–2). Rather, the central disagreement concerns which statutory provision applies to Saydulaev. Thus, the issue before the Court is one 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 2 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 Saydulaev—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). 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,³ 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.” Pursuant to § 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 3 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. 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 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.*; see also *Castañon-Nava v. U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Sec.*, 161 F.4th 1048, 1061 (7th Cir. 2025) (“[I]t is Congress’s prerogative to define a term however it wishes, and it has chosen to limit the definition of an ‘applicant for admission’ to ‘an alien present in the United States who has not been admitted or who arrives in the United States.’”) (quoting 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1)).

Thus, an alien present in the United States can qualify as an “applicant for admission” under § 1225 without also “seeking admission” by necessity. See *Castañon-Nava*, 161 F. 4th at 1061 (noting that Congress “could easily have included noncitizens who are ‘seeking admission’ within that definition but elected not to do so”).

Because Saydulaev 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. The Federal Respondents disagree with this reading. They take the position that for a noncitizen to qualify as an “applicant for admission” who is “seeking admission” he must merely be (1) present in the United States, and (2) not be legally admitted by an immigration officer.

(Doc. # 4 at 11–12). Thus, the Federal Respondents contend that despite Saydulaev’s continued residence in the United States for more than three years he is still “seeking admission” because “an ‘applicant for admission’ is necessarily ‘seeking admission.’” (*Id.*).

The Federal 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. 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, the Federal Respondents misconstrue, or ignore entirely, the word “seeking” in the phrase “seeking admission.” They argue that a noncitizen who is merely present in the United States is necessarily also seeking admission. (Doc. # 4 at 13–14). 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 Saydulaev, a noncitizen who has resided in the United States for more than three years is “actively seeking admission.” See J.G.O., 2025 WL 3040142, at *3 (“‘[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). Neither party contends that Saydulaev’s asylum application impacts whether he is “seeking admission” under § 1225(b)(2)(A).

Even if they had, however, this fact is not dispositive because Saydulaev did not “apply for asylum when [he] was ‘arriving’ to the United States, as the statute would require.” *Edahi*, 2025 WL 3466682, at *8 (emphasis added). Rather, Saydulaev applied for asylum on April 25, 2023—roughly six months after his initial entry. (Doc. # 1-1 at 21). At the time he applied for asylum, Saydulaev had been residing in the United States for several months.

Consequently, “[t]here is simply no logical way to interpret [Saydulaev] as ‘arriving[.]’” *Edahi*, 2025 WL 3466682, at *8; see also *Santos Franco v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-cv-13188, 2025 WL 2977118, at *7 (E.D. Mich. Oct. 21, 2025) (“And even if Respondent argues that [the petitioner] is ‘seeking admission’ because he applied for asylum... that was not done when he was ‘arriving’ to [the United States].

So the applicability of § 1225(b)(2)(A) would still be incorrect.”); *Benitez v. Francis*, 795 F. Supp. 3d. 475, 488 fn. 7 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 13, 2025) (“To the extent that Respondents might point to [the petitioner’s] asylum application to argue that he continues to ‘seek’ something, what he seeks is not ‘admission’ or ‘lawful entry’ to the United States, but to obtain a lawful means to remain here.”); *Navarrete v. Noem*, No. 4:25-cv-157-DJH, 2025 WL 3298081, at *2 (W.D.

Ky. Nov. 26, 2025) (“The fact that [the petitioner] sought asylum almost a year after entering the United States [] does not render § 1225(b)(2) applicable because she did not apply at the border.”). Numerous district courts, including the undersigned Judge in multiple prior Orders, 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 and Second Circuits have agreed with this reading. *Castañon-Nava*, 161 F.4th at 1061 (“[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)); *Cunha v. Freden*, No. 25-3141-pr, 2026 WL 1146044, at *9 (2d. Cir. Apr. 28, 2026) (“Nor did Congress intend to mandate detention of noncitizens who are ‘applicants for admission’ but not ‘seeking admission,’ such as illegal entrants, like Petitioner who have nonetheless lived in the United States for a substantial time.”).

To adopt the Federal 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).⁴ 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 Saydulaev— 4 The Court notes that in their Response, the Federal Respondents repeatedly reference Matter of Yajure Hurtado, 29 I. & N. Dec.

216 (BIA 2025), an opinion from the Board of Immigration Appeals. 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. an alien who was arrested and remains detained by ICE pending removal proceedings. (Doc. # 1 ¶¶ 1, 30). 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 1061-62. 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 who are within the United States after an entry, irrespective of its legality”) (emphasis added).

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 the Federal 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 the Federal 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*, 792 F. Supp. 3d. at 221 (“[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. The Federal 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.⁵ 5 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.

(Doc. # 4 at 19–20). 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 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.”).

The Court acknowledges that the Federal Respondents cite a string of nonbinding district court decisions supporting its interpretation. For example, the Federal Respondents cite *Mejia Olalde v. Noem et al.*, a case from the Eastern District of Missouri. (Doc. # 4 at 11). There, the court agreed with the government’s interpretation of § 1225(b)(2)(A), concluding that the petitioner was an applicant for admission because he was present in the United States and had not been legally admitted.

No. 1:25-cv-00168- JMD, 2025 WL 3131942, at *3 (E.D. Mo. Nov. 10, 2025). In its analysis, the court looked not towards whether the petitioner was “seeking admission” but whether he was an “applicant for admission.” *Id.* at *2. Its reasoning rested in part on the conclusion that it “makes no sense to describe an active applicant for admission as somebody who is not ‘seeking’ admission.” *Id.* at *3.

Yet, as the Court discussed above, “to be detained pursuant to Section 1225(b)(2)(A), that is precisely what the text requires.” Edahi, 2025 WL 3466682, at *12. “Holding as Olalde does would require the Court to ignore the plain § 1225 or § 1226, but such policy arguments are not reflected in the Laken Riley Act amendment ... passed only a few months ago.” Id. statutory text.

But Courts must give effect to every word in the statute... In ignoring the very words of section 1225(b)(2)(A) Olalde defies this principle.” Id. The Federal Respondents also cite *Rojas v. Olson*, No. 25-cv-1437-bhl, 2025 WL 3033967 (E.D. Wis. Oct. 30, 2025). (Doc. # 4 at 3).

However, the Court is no more persuaded by this decision. Specifically, the Court is unconvinced because *Rojas* did not conclude that the recent addition of the Laken Riley Act would be rendered superfluous if § 1225(b)(2)(A) required mandatory detention of all noncitizens. See *Rojas*, 2025 WL 3033967, at *9 (“[L]egislation passed in 2025 has little bearing on the meaning of legislation enacted in 1996.

Indeed, nothing in the Laken Riley Act suggests any Congressional thoughts concerning the issues presented in this case.”). This Court, and many others, disagree with that interpretation. See Edahi, 2025 WL 3466682, at *11 (“When Congress acts to amend a statute, we presume it intends its amendment to have real and substantial effect... *Rojas*’ reading of the Laken Riley Act underscores this very premise.”) (internal quotations omitted).

Finally, pertinent legislative and enforcement history reinforces 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 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 Saydulaev is not subject to § 1225(b)(2)(A). Rather, the facts of the case make clear that his detention is governed by § 1226(a).⁶ C. Due Process Because the Court has concluded that § 1226(a) is the appropriate statutory framework to apply to Saydulaev, the Court must now determine whether his present detention violates his due process rights.

The Federal Respondents contend that Saydulaev is not entitled to any more detention than Congress has authorized. (Doc. # 4 at 19). And because the Federal Respondents insist that his detention is mandatory under § 1225(b)(2)(A), they conclude that Saydulaev is receiving all the process he is due. (*Id.*).

However, as discussed above, Saydulaev’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, ⁶ The Court acknowledges that the Circuit Courts have split over this issue. The Fifth and Eighth Circuits have reached the opposite conclusion to this Court. *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). On the other hand, the Second Circuit has held that individuals like Petitioner are entitled to a bond hearing under § 1226. *Cunha*, 2026 WL 1146044. And the Seventh Circuit has reached the same conclusion—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*, 161 F.4th at 1048).

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).

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*, 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 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 Saydulaev 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); see also *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 690 (“Freedom from imprisonment—from government custody, detention, or other forms of physical restraint—lies at the heart of the very liberty that [the Due Process Clause] protects.”).

Our immigration law has long recognized that noncitizens have an interest in an individualized hearing prior to detention in connection with immigration proceedings. See *Yamataya v. Fisher*, 189 U.S. 86, 101 (1903). Further, the Supreme Court has previously required individualized hearings for deprivations of interests less fundamental than Saydulaev’s interest in freedom from detention.

See *Goldberg v. Kelly*, 397 U.S. 254, 268 (1970) (requiring an individualized hearing prior to the termination of welfare benefits). Second, the risk of erroneous deprivation of that interest is high if Saydulaev is not afforded a detention 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 Civ.

9983 (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).

To date, Saydulaev has not had a detention hearing at which his eligibility for bond is determined on the merits of his individual circumstances. Thus, Saydulaev’s present detention creates a high risk of an erroneous deprivation of his liberty interest.

Accordingly, the second Mathews factor favors Petitioner. 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 favor of Saydulaev. Saydulaev claims that immediate release is the most appropriate remedy in this case. This Court agrees with Petitioner that his Fifth Amendment due process rights were violated when he was detained without access to an individualized hearing.

However, the Court disagrees that immediate release is the proper remedy. Rather, this Court agrees with other district courts in the country which have concluded that the proper remedy to this violation is a constitutionally adequate bond hearing in which the government bears the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence. See Hernandez-Lara v. Lyons, 10 F.4th 19, 39 (1st Cir.

2021) (“[T]he government must bear the burden of proving dangerousness or flight risk in order to continue detaining a noncitizen under section 1226(a)"); Velasco Lopez v. Decker, 978 F.3d 842, 846 (2nd Cir. 2020) (finding that the “district court correctly ordered a new bond hearing where the Government bore the burden of proof”); Azalyar v. Raycraft, No. 1:25-cv-916, 2026 WL 30741, at *5 (S.D.

Ohio Jan. 2, 2026) (“Respondents must provide a custody redetermination hearing at which the government bears the burden of justifying [the petitioner’s] continued detention”); Rajesh v. Barr, 420 F. Supp. 3d 78, 87-88 (W.D.N.Y. Oct. 29, 2019) (“The Court agrees with the district court cases holding that allocating the burden to a noncriminal alien to prove he should be released on bond under § 1226(a) violates due process because it asks ‘[t]he individual... to share equally with society the risk of error when the possible injury to the individual is significantly greater than any possible harm to the [Government]’” (quoting Addington v. Texas, 441 U.S. 418, 427 (1979))).

IV. CONCLUSION Accordingly, for the reasons stated herein, IT IS SO 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 constitutionally adequate bond hearing where the government bears the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) within seven (7) days of the date of this Order; and (3) | Respondent shall file a Status Report with this Court on or before May 20, 2026 to certify compliance with this Order.

The Status Report shall include when the bond hearing occurred, if bond was granted or denied, and if denied, the reasons for that denial. This 6th day of May, 2026. SO Signed By: | call J David L. Bunnin DP SS" —s Chief United States District Judge G:Judge-DLB\DATA\ORDERS\Cov2026\26-112 MOO re Habeas Petition.docx 22