IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO
Judge Regina M. Rodriguez

Civil Action No. 26-cv-3529-RMR

JOEL ANDERSON SANDOVAL ESPINOZA,

Petitioner,

v.

JUAN BALTAZAR, Warden of the Denver Contract Detention Facility, Aurora, Colorado, in his official capacity,
GEORGE VALDEZ, Field Office Director, Denver Field Office, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, in his official capacity,
MARKWAYNE MULLIN, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in his official capacity,
DAVID VENTURELLA, Acting Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, in his official capacity,
TODD BLANCHE, Acting Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice, in his official capacity,

Respondents.

ORDER

Petitioner Joel Anderson Sandoval Espinoza ("Petitioner") is a citizen of Peru who entered the United States on June 9, 2023. ECF No. 1 ¶ 16. He presented himself at a port of entry and expressed fear of return to Peru. *Id.* The Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") detained Petitioner and processed him for a credible fear interview. *Id.* DHS determined that Petitioner demonstrated a credible fear of persecution and paroled him into the United States pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1182(d)(5) for a period of one year to pursue asylum. *Id.* On June 13, 2023, DHS served Petitioner with a Notice to Appear ("NTA") and initiated removal proceedings. *Id.* ¶ 17. While in removal proceedings,

Petitioner filed his application for asylum, which remains pending. *Id.* Petitioner has lived and worked in the United States since he entered. *Id.* ¶18. He supports his family through employment in the A/C mechanics and warehouse industry, while paying taxes and contributing to his community. *Id.* He has two toddlers who are United States citizens. *Id.*

On July 1, 2026, DHS detained Petitioner after he left his local Department of Motor Vehicle ("DMV") office. *Id.* Petitioner argues his parole and liberty were unlawfully revoked without notice or justification. *Id.* ¶ 19. He seeks immediate release from custody or, in the alternative, a bond hearing pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a).[1] *Id.* at 22. The relief requested by Petitioner and the legal claims and arguments upon which it's premised, are familiar to the Court and the parties. Petitioner contends that he is being improperly subjected to mandatory detention under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2). This Court previously analyzed the statutory framework and determined that "§ 1225(b)(2) only applies to noncitizens 'seeking admission' and inspected while trying to enter the country, and not to noncitizens who have lived in the United States continuously for over two years," *Mendoza Gutierrez v. Baltasar*, No. 25-CV-2720-RMR, 2025 WL 2962908, at *5-*9 (D. Colo. Oct. 17, 2025), and joined the chorus of courts in this district and around the nation that have overwhelmingly rejected Respondents' position.[2] *See also Cunha v. Freden*,

[1] Petitioner filed the Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus, ECF No. 1, and Respondents filed a Response, ECF No. 10. Petitioner also filed the Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and/or Preliminary Injunction, ECF No. 4, and Respondents filed a Response, ECF No. 11.

[2] *See Espinoza Ruiz v. Baltazar*, No. 1:25-cv-03642-CNS, 2025 WL 3294762 (D[2] Colo. Nov. 26, 2025); *Arauz v. Baltazar*, No. 1:25-cv-03260-CNS, 2025 WL 3041840 (D. Colo. Oct. 31, 2025); *Hernandez v. Baltazar, et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-03094-CNS, 2025 WL 2996643 (D. Colo. Oct. 24, 2025); *Hernandez Vazquez v. Baltasar, et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-3049-GPG, ECF No. 22 (D. Colo. Oct. 23, 2025); *Loa Caballero v. Baltazar, et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-3120-NYW, 2025 WL 2977650 (D. Colo. Oct. 22, 2025); *Pineda v. Baltasar*, No. 25-cv-02955-GPG, 2025 WL 3516291, at *1 (D. Colo. Oct. 20, 2025); *Mendoza Gutierrez v. Baltasar, et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-2720-RMR, 2025 WL 2962908 (D. Colo. Oct. 17, 2025); *Garcia Cortes v. Noem*, No. 1:25-cv-

No. 25-3141-PR, 2026 WL 1146044, at *5 (2d Cir. Apr. 28, 2026) ("In sum, Section 1226(a) plainly applies to noncitizens, like Petitioner, who are present in the United States, but charged as inadmissible for entering the country without inspection and admission."); *id.* at *13 ("[W]e find no basis to justify departing from the unambiguous meaning of the text, under which Petitioner is not subject to mandatory detention, because he is not 'seeking admission' under Section 1225(b)(2)(A).").

Since then, the Tenth Circuit has also spoken and articulated in great detail the reasons why noncitizens "in the country's interior," like Petitioner, are not subject to mandatory detention under § 1225(b)(2). *See generally, Santillan Quiroz v. Mullin*, No. 26-6019, 2026 WL 1876709 (10th Cir. June 30, 2026). The Tenth Circuit concluded that, "[b]ased on the statutory text and context . . . "§1225(b)(2)(A)'s application is limited to the border." *Id.* at *8. Because Petitioner has resided in the United States and was not detained at the border, he is improperly detained under § 1225. Additionally, Respondents do not submit a brief in opposition to the Petition or the Motion. ECF Nos. 10 and 11.

With respect to the appropriate relief, this Court has previously granted similar petitions and ordered Respondents to provide those petitioners with a bond hearing

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02677-CNS, 2025 WL 2652880 (D. Colo. Sept. 16, 2025); *Carrillo Fernandez*, 2025 WL 3485800; *Garcia-Arauz v. Noem*, No. 2:25-cv-02117-RFB-EJY, 2025 WL 3470902 (D. Nev. Dec. 3, 2025); *Escobar Salgado v. Mattos*, No. 2:25-cv-01872-RFB-EJY, --- F. Supp. 3d ----, 2025 WL 3205356 (D. Nev. Nov. 17, 2025); *Ramos v. Rokosky*, No. 25cv15892 (EP), 2025 WL 3063588 (D.N.J. Nov. 3, 2025); *Godinez-Lopez v. Ladwig*, 2025 WL 3047889 (W.D. Tenn. Oct. 31, 2025); *Jimenez v. FCI Berlin, Warden*, No. 25-CV-326-LM-AJ, 2025 WL 2639390 (D.N.H. Sept. 8, 2025); *Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft*, No. 2:25-CV-12486, 2025 WL 2496379 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 29, 2025); *Romero v. Hyde*, Civil Action No. 25-11631-BEM, 2025 WL 2403827 (D. Mass. Aug. 19, 2025); *Lopez Benitez v. Francis*, No. 25 Civ. 5937 (DEH), 795 F.Supp.3d 475 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 13, 2025).

where the "Government shall bear the burden of proving, by clear and convincing evidence, that Petitioner is a flight risk or danger to the community such that his physical custody is legally justified." *See Tzompa Garcia v. Baltazar*, No. 26-CV-2713-RMR, 2026 WL 2240137, at *1 (D. Colo. Aug. 4, 2026); *see also A.A.G.R. v. Baltazar*, No. 26-CV-02344-RMR, 2026 WL 2110577, at *2 (D. Colo. July 22, 2026). Several of these bond hearings were not compliant with the Court's orders, specifically with respect to applying the "clear and convincing" standard. *Tzompa Garcia*, 2026 WL 2240137, at *3; *A.A.G.R.*, 2026 WL 2110577, at *3. Other courts in this District have also expressed "concern[] that the immigration courts are not affording immigrants fair bond hearings," as "the mounting evidence that bond determination hearings conducted in Immigration Court under § 1226(a) have preordained outcomes has become impossible to ignore." *Pal v. Lyons,* 2026 WL 937962, at *4 (D. Colo. Apr. 7, 2025); *see also Quiroz Zacarias v. Mullin,* 2026 WL 1092162, at *4-*5 (D. Colo. Apr. 22, 2026); *see also Asfir v. Blanche*, No. 26-cv-01435-GPG (D. Colo. July 2, 2026). Given this reality, the Court finds Petitioner's immediate release is the appropriate remedy. *See Santillan Quiroz*, 2026 WL 1876709, at *17 n.13 (contemplating the district court should "order the Government to, within seven days of such order, either provide [the petitioner] with a bond hearing or else release him.").

CONCLUSION

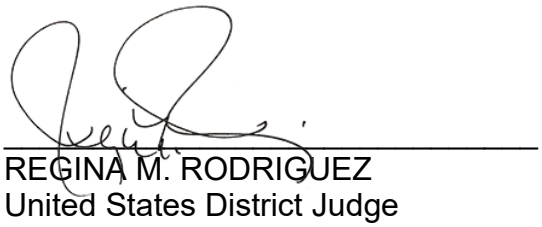
For the reasons set forth above, IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus (ECF No. 1) is **GRANTED**;

2. Respondents shall **IMMEDIATELY RELEASE** Petitioner on his own recognizance, along with all his personal belongings, without onerous conditions of release, including, without limitation, GPS monitoring, mandatory reporting, or other restrictions on his movement. Respondents shall facilitate Petitioner's transportation from the detention facility by providing all necessary identity and travel documents to return to his primary address;
3. Respondents are **ENJOINED** from re-arresting or re-detaining Petitioner unless they demonstrate, by clear and convincing evidence at a pre-deprivation bond hearing before a neutral decisionmaker, that he is a flight risk or danger to the community such that his physical custody is legally justified pursuant to 8 U.S.C § 1226(a). At any such bond hearing, Respondents shall bear the burden of proof, and Petitioner shall be allowed to have counsel present. This injunction shall remain in effect until such time as this Court, or the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, vacates this Order;
4. During such periods of time as Petitioner remains in Respondents' custody, Respondents shall continue to be **ENJOINED** from removing, transferring, or causing the removal or transfer of Petitioner from the District of Colorado until such time as this Court, or the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, vacates this Order;
5. On or before **August 19, 2026**, Respondents shall file a status report certifying compliance with this Order; and
6. Because Petitioner has received the relief he requests, his Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and/or Preliminary Injunction, ECF No. 4, is **DENIED AS MOOT**.

DATED: August 14, 2026

BY THE COURT:



REGINA M. RODRIGUEZ
United States District Judge