

On Sunday, February 9, Swarthmore Monthly Meeting (PYM) approved the following minute:

Swarthmore Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends fully supports Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) for the courage and conviction shown in joining New England Yearly Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Adelphi and Richmond Monthly Meetings as plaintiffs in their lawsuit to block the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) from its abrupt shift in policy that enables federal immigration enforcement officials to enter houses of worship for their immigration enforcement actions.

From the earliest time of the creation of Pennsylvania, religious liberty has been a hallmark of the colony, the state and by extension, the nation. Article 1 Section 3 of the Pennsylvania Constitution reflects this basic belief:

"All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences; no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry against his consent; no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience, and no preference shall ever be given by law to any religious establishments or modes of worship."

For Quaker congregations, communal worship is not just important, it is the very process of worship itself. Quakers have engaged in communal meeting for worship in this country for over 350 years. They suffered repression of their worship services after the restoration of the monarchy in Britain in 1660 and to find relief from this repression they founded Pennsylvania. This repression was wrong under the Stuarts in the Seventeen Century and is just as wrong under the Trump Administration in the Twenty-first.

Swarthmore Meeting is grateful for the swift response of the General Secretary, Clerks and committee members who acted with purpose and clarity in making this happen. Houses of worship are sacred spaces and not, as the Trump Administration cynically asserts, a place where, "criminal aliens go to hide." We hope the Court will "declare unconstitutional any policy permitting government agents to carry out immigration enforcement at or near houses of worship when the policy is limited only by individual agents' subjective 'common sense,' vacate the 2025 Policy, and enjoin DHS and its constituent agencies from implementing or enforcing the policy."

With deep appreciation and support,

Swarthmore Monthly Meeting, Swarthmore, PA  
Elizabeth McAndrew, clerk