

Patapsco Friends Meeting (Quakers)
SUPPORT: [SB977](#) ([HB1431](#)) *Maryland Data Privacy Act*
February 16, 2025

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is a community of faith based on an experience of a transforming power named many ways: the Inner Light, the Spirit of Christ, the Guide, the Living God, the Divine Presence. Quakers (or Friends) hold as the basis of this faith the belief that God endows each human being with a measure of the Divine Spirit. The gift of God's presence and the light of God's truth have been available to all people in all ages. Quaker beliefs are based on a Judeo-Christian heritage and adherence to the Inner Light, the Divine Seed, and that of God in everyone. Quakerism is, essentially, a religious fellowship based on common religious ideals and experiences, and it is without a binding creed. Quakers express this way of life in many ways, some traditional and some which reject traditional expression.

Quaker experience of the Divine affects what we do in our personal lives, what we believe and how we work for changes in the wider world. "Testimonies" are what Quakers call the ways we have found to live and act based on our beliefs. As Friends seek truth, peace, and harmony in the Light of that Spirit, our testimonies emerge. Each person must prayerfully seek individual guidance and must follow the Light found within.

The immanence of God implies that all persons are children of the Divine and brothers and sisters of one another. Each one has the capacity to discern spiritual truth and to hold direct communion with God. We also wish to affirm our belief that Quakerism is God's "big tent," politically. We welcome people with all sorts of political beliefs—Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, liberals, socialists, Libertarians, and Independents—to the Religious Society of Friends.

George Fox, a founding Quaker, encouraged Friends: "Let your lives speak." In every generation Quakers have devoted their lives to important social issues. The immigration enforcement crises that we are facing today challenge Friends as individuals and as communities to take decisive actions to protect f/Friends, Quakers and non-Quakers, immigrants and vulnerable people, no exceptions. Friends realize that they can do only a small part of what is needed, so they are working through individuals and other organizations to continue to put into action the testimonies of truth, integrity, equality, peace, community, and simplicity. These beliefs lead us to the importance of state-level advocacy in Maryland to support passing the Maryland Data Privacy Act, and other immigrant protections, during the 2025 General Assembly.

Immigrant families should be able to access critical government services without worrying that their information will be shared with federal immigration authorities. This bill blocks U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from obtaining warrantless access to state and local agency databases. It alters certain provisions of law to require a law enforcement agency, State or local government to deny access to certain databases, facilities, or buildings by certain individuals seeking access for the purpose of enforcing federal immigration law, under certain circumstances.

In 1682, Friend William Penn said, "True godliness doesn't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it...." The spiritual and social testimonies of Quakers, and statements of our Friends, lead us to support this proposed emergency legislation to protect our immigrant friends, our brothers and sisters in God's big tent.

Your Friends,
Eileen and Richard Stanzione, Co-Clerks
Patapsco Friends Meeting