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Attorney General Marshall Celebrates U.S. Supreme Court Order on Religious Objections to Vaccine Mandates

(**Montgomery, Ala**) – Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall issued a statement celebrating the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to vacate a lower-court ruling that denied religious protections to the Amish community in rural New York. Alabama led a multistate brief supporting Amish-only private schools after the State of New York imposed massive financial penalties for non-compliance with the State’s school immunization schedule. Like most States, New York had long allowed sincere religious objections to vaccines. But in 2019, state lawmakers eliminated the exemptions, calling the religious objections “fake” and “selfish.”

Attorney General Marshall argued that New York had violated the First Amendment rights of parents to exercise their religion and to raise their children according to their deeply held religious beliefs. “Alabama joined this legal battle to stop New York’s hostility toward religion from becoming entrenched in federal law,” said Attorney General Marshall. “This ruling vacates a bad decision and confirms we were right to take action. While the Supreme Court did not conclusively resolve the issue of religious objections to vaccines, this victory signals to courts that they must respect the religious rights of parents. No family should be forced to choose between raising their children in their faith and accessing a basic education.”

The 21-state brief filed in September argued that the First Amendment’s Free Exercise Clause was meant to protect against the government coercing actions that violate one’s religious convictions. Many of America’s founders fled religious persecution. Recent precedent also places a high value on the religious rights of parents to dictate the education and upbringing of their children. The brief also explains how a law like New York’s vaccine mandate, which includes some exemptions but not religious ones, is not “neutral and generally applicable.” The States emphasize that public health is not a legitimate reason to trample on the rights of conscience, and they fear that States like New York and the federal government will continue to encroach on these essential freedoms.

In May 2024, Alabama also led a 20-state coalition amicus brief supporting the New York Amish schools before the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

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