

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 493  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Fennell, *et al.*)

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**Public Schools - Commemorative Day - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day**

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This bill designates November 14 each year as “Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day” to commemorate Ruby Bridges, who, on November 14, 1960, became the first African American student to integrate an all-white elementary school in New Orleans, Louisiana. Each local board education must develop and implement a program of education as specified for Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day to be held on or around November 14 each year. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must develop model content for a program, as specified, and adopt regulations. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** MSDE can develop the required model content for the program and adopt regulations using existing resources; however, resources may be temporarily diverted from current priorities.

**Local Effect:** Local school systems can likely develop and implement the required program of education based on the model resources developed by MSDE using existing resources; however, instruction time and resources may be diverted from current priorities. Revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** Programs developed by local school systems may include:

- symbolic walks to school reflecting on Ruby Bridges’ historic walk;

- instructional materials on civil rights history, school desegregation, and racial equality;
- discussions, assemblies, or presentations about Ruby Bridges and the civil rights movement; and
- interactive projects emphasizing diversity, tolerance, and justice (e.g., artwork, essays, performances).

In developing a program, local school systems are encouraged to collaborate and partner with specified individuals and organizations.

The model content developed by MSDE may include instructional material, including those specified, and must include resources to assist teachers to engage in discussion about civil rights and social justice.

**Current Law:** The public schools must devote a part of the day to appropriate exercises for the following days: Washington’s Birthday; Lincoln’s Birthday; Veterans’ Day; Columbus Day; Arbor Day; Black History Month with an emphasis on Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass and the contributions they made in the fight against slavery; and any other day of national significance.

The [Maryland Standards and Frameworks in Social Studies](#) provides students with several age-appropriate opportunities to learn about Ruby Bridges and civil rights, including those for grade 5 social studies, middle school U.S. history, high school U.S. history, and U.S. Government. State Frameworks are defined as supporting documents and provide guidance for implementing the State Standards in Social Studies, which are reviewed and adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education every eight years.

**Local Expenditures:** This estimate assumes that MSDE develops cost-effective Ruby Bridges content for local school systems that requires minimal additional content development and staff training. However, if MSDE’s content is more costly to implement or if local school systems must develop their own materials, their expenditures could increase meaningfully. Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS), Prince George’s County Public Schools, and St. Mary’s Public Schools all advise that costs for curriculum development and trainings may be meaningful. For example, AACPS estimates costs of \$28,400 in fiscal 2026 and \$13,500 in fiscal 2027 for curriculum development and training. Additionally, while local school systems may choose to implement the bill in ways that further increase costs, these expenditures are not mandated. Thus, overall, local school system expenditures are not materially affected.

## **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** SB 1003 (Senator Benson) - Rules.

**Information Source(s):** Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs; Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 10, 2025  
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