

# **HB493 One Pasadena Favorable 2025.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Jasen

Position: FAV

Education, Energy, and the Environment  
House Bill 493  
Favorable Report

Honorable Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee;

One Pasadena is an anti-bigotry group that works to change the hearts and minds of people in order to make Pasadena a safe and inclusive community. We, the Steering Committee of One Pasadena, believe that education has the power to change hearts and minds. Erasing history, no matter how uncomfortable that history is, won't make this country great. We need to acknowledge and understand how this country came to be what it is today if we are to have any chance to improve things for everyone in it. The experiences of Ruby Bridges are powerful and eye-opening. Everyone should be fully taught about the Civil Rights Movement, and Ruby Bridges' story is a good opening to that - especially for young students.

Please give House Bill 493 a favorable report, and continue to ensure that our youth are learning the facts of history. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
The One Pasadena Steering Committee  
Pasadena, MD

# **HB 493 for Senate - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Da**

Uploaded by: Joseph Jakuta

Position: FAV

**Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**Testimony on: HB 493 - "Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day"**  
**Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's**  
**Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer**  
**Position: Favorable**  
**Hearing Date: March, 2025**



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to HB 493, "Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day." Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change-causing pollution in our schools, and our group is active in Prince George's County. In particular, we worked directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a first-in-the-nation School Climate Change Action Plan.

In our work developing a Climate Change Action Plan for PGCPS, one of the main solutions to reducing vehicle emissions was to encourage more walking and biking to school. This is particularly important for students that live within the non-transportation areas, which are defined as being within 1½ mile for elementary school students and 2 miles for middle and high school students in Prince George's County.<sup>1</sup> However, one of the barriers to walking and biking to school is feeling unsafe, which is largely due to dangerous driving. When students and their parents do not feel it is safe to get to school by other means, they drive independently, which results in more localized air pollution and more chances for vehicles-on-pedestrian collisions at schools.

Ruby Bridges Day is an excellent avenue to break down the barriers when it comes to safe walking to school. Like "Bike to Work Day" it is an opportunity for students and parents that may not otherwise walk to school to see what the possibilities are so as to start to make decisions that could be better for their health, personal economics, and the planet.

Ruby Bridges is also a great way to connect civil justice with climate justice. The most sustainable way to access school is to walk. During Ruby Bridges's time in school walking was how nearly every child accessed their school house, granting them freedom to move and better opportunity for physical activity. But now students are often driven by their parents because we have made our streets unsafe for them, which in turn treats them second class citizens while harming the air they breathe and the planet they will inherit.

Ruby Bridges was brave as she walked to school. By honoring her legacy with Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day we instill the sense of bravery into the students of today that they will need to face the challenging problems we will leave them and encourage pursuing an empowering, sustainable way to access their education.

We encourage a **FAVORABLE** report for this important legislation.

# **HB0493 Written Testimony\_Safe Routes Partnership\_K**

Uploaded by: Kori Johnson

Position: FAV



## **HB0493 - Public Schools – Commemorative Day – Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day - Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**

### **FAVORABLE**

March 18, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

**I am writing in strong favor of HB0493** which would designate November 14<sup>th</sup> as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in Maryland. I am supporting this bill as a Maryland resident, and on behalf of my workplace, the Safe Routes Partnership. I was born and raised in Columbia and am a proud graduate of Howard County Public Schools. As a child growing up in Columbia, I had the privilege of being a part of a diverse, multicultural community, living in walkable neighborhoods, and receiving a top-tier public school education. Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day did not exist when I was growing up, but I see how my experiences align with the goals of this event, which are to inspire constructive dialogue around anti-racism and kindness, to encourage students to walk and roll to school, and to honor the living legacy of Ruby Bridges and her impact on education and civil rights. By officially recognizing November 14<sup>th</sup> as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, we can show that Maryland continues to be a great place for students to live, play, and learn.

Currently, I am a Senior Program and Engagement Manager at the Safe Routes Partnership, a national organization that works to make it safer and easier for people to walk, bike, and roll to community destinations like schools, parks, grocery stores, and libraries. In my role at the Partnership, I help communities develop and implement Safe Routes to School initiatives, including events like Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. This past year, our organization awarded \$40,000 in grant funding to assist communities in organizing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day celebrations. We awarded grants to 50 communities across the U.S. including two here in Maryland: Thomas Stone Elementary School in Mt. Rainier and Rolling Terrace Elementary School in Takoma Park. Over 1200 students participated in these two celebrations that included art activities, Ruby Bridges Read-Alouds, book displays, and community walks to school. One of the event organizers commented, "It was amazing we got to educate and promote to the school and community who learned about the Ruby Bridges story and how we can all be [a] hero and make an impact on the world we live in."

This funding is part of a larger initiative to grow the Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day movement. Each year on November 14<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of thousands of students across the country commemorate Ruby Bridges' historic act by walking, biking, and rolling to their school and discussing how they can make positive changes in their communities. In recent years, California and New Jersey have officially designated November 14<sup>th</sup> as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, demonstrating their commitment to inclusive, accessible streets, transportation safety, and education equity. Now, Maryland has the



opportunity to join California and New Jersey as national leaders in the Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day movement.

**I strongly urge the Committee and the full Senate to pass HB0493 this legislative session.** With the passage of this bill, Maryland can keep Ruby's legacy alive and empower the next generation of changemakers.

Thank you for your consideration!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kori Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kori Johnson

Senior Manager, Program and Engagement

The Safe Routes Partnership

# **XHB493\_MSEA\_Lamb\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV



**FAVORABLE**  
**House Bill 493**  
**Public Schools – Commemorative Day – Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**March 20, 2025**

**Lauren Lamb**  
**Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 493, which would designate November 14 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 school in New Orleans, Louisiana. It would also direct the State Department of Education to develop model content for a program of education for Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

We appreciate the sponsor's effort to highlight a pivotal moment in this nation's painful history of school segregation. We wholeheartedly agree that educators should have access to high-quality resources and guidance to teach a complete account of U.S. history. To that end, we support this bill's directive to MSDE to create model content like lesson plans and discussion guides on Ruby Bridges. We are hopeful that these resources will be made available to educators to enrich their teaching on the history of school integration and the civil rights movement.

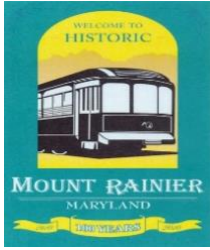
MSEA has longstanding concerns about legislatively mandating the implementation of specific curriculum and programming. It is the duty of the State Board, county boards, and educators to set instructional standards holistically and shape the scope and sequence of content, respectively. Additions made through the General Assembly may condense the time available for each topic in the 180-day school year. We therefore appreciate the sponsor's amendment to remove section (B), which directed the manner of local implementation. Instead, we would urge that efforts toward local implementation are approached through county boards with educator input.

It is more important than ever that students have access to an accurate and honest history education. **We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 493.**

## **Support for House Bill 493 – Public Schools - Co**

Uploaded by: Mayor Celina Benitez

Position: FAV



## Office of The Mayor Celina Benitez

1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712 Telephone: (301) 985-6585 [MountRainierMD.org](http://MountRainierMD.org)

Monday, March 17, 2025

### Education, Energy and Environment Committee

#### Support for House Bill 493 – Public Schools - Commemorative Day - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Honorable Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee:

On behalf of the City of Mount Rainier, I am writing to express our strong support for **House Bill 493**, which designates November 14 as “Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day” in Maryland’s public schools.

This important legislation not only honors Ruby Bridges’ historic role in desegregating public schools but also provides an opportunity for students across the state to engage in meaningful discussions about civil rights, diversity, and social justice.

Our community has already demonstrated a strong commitment to this initiative. The Mount Rainier Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) has been an active participant in recognizing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, and in the following year, Thomas Stone Elementary also received an award for organizing their own walk. These efforts reflect the enthusiasm and dedication of our schools in fostering conversations about equality, history, and the power of civic action.

Additionally, as Mayor of Mount Rainier, I have taken official steps to support this initiative by issuing a proclamation declaring “Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day” in our city. This proclamation underscores our city’s dedication to honoring Ruby Bridges’ courage and to reinforcing the importance of inclusive education in our schools.

**House Bill 493** will further institutionalize these efforts by ensuring that every public school in Maryland has the opportunity to commemorate Ruby Bridges and engage students in learning about the ongoing struggle for educational equity. We urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass this bill and join us in fostering a more just and inclusive future for our students.

We urge the committee to issue a **favorable report on HB 493** and support its passage.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact our office 301-985-6585 or via email

[MayorBenitez@MountRainierMD.org](mailto:MayorBenitez@MountRainierMD.org)

Sincerely,

*Celina R. Benitez*

Mayor Celina R. Benitez, City of Mount Rainier

# **CJR Testimony Bill-HB0493 (2).pdf**

Uploaded by: Robin Palomares

Position: FAV



**Baltimore City – Ruby Bridges Walk To School Bill – HB0493  
Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/ Middle School  
FAVORABLE**

March 17, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

As the Student Government Advisor at Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/ Middle School, I am writing this letter to give my full endorsement of Bill HB0493, and also to share the endorsements of our Student Government Delegates. On November 16, 2024, our SGA and our Second Grade classes participated in a Ruby Bridges Walk to school in our school neighborhood.

After the Ruby Bridges Walk, students participated in a reflective writing exercise. I am sharing excerpts from their writing below, as I strongly believe that it is more powerful than anything I could write myself. In closing, I hope you feel the urgency and importance of passing Bill HB0493. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Robin Palomares  
SGA Advisor  
2nd Grade ML Teacher  
palomares@thecjrschool.org

**COMMODORE TO COLLEGE: 100% FOR 100%**

6820 Fait Avenue, Baltimore MD 21224 · Ph: 410-396-9300 · Fax: 410-396-9167

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As the lead Safety Patrol Delegate of Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/Middle School, I write in support of HB0493, which would authorize Maryland public schools to have a Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day to commemorate Ruby Bridges. HB0493 will provide understanding of our history so that we have a solid understanding of all that we have been through to bring us to today.

- **Laura Lopez-Xochicale** - *Lead Safety Patrol Delegate* (Grade 7)

This was powerful for us as a school community because Ruby Bridges was a very important person that faced many discriminations. This could've had a larger impact if there were more places to go and stand up for Ruby Bridges. The message this gives us is BLM. No matter what race you are.

- **Erica Solano Rodriguez** - *Safety Patrol/SGA Delegate* (Grade 7)
- **Allison Garcia-Montalvo** - *Safety Patrol/SGA Delegate* (Grade 7)

The Ruby Bridges walk is a pivotal movement for young children in our community to help understand the fight for equality. With our political system today the Ruby Bridges walk symbolizes courage for younger youth. With this bill being passed for MD public schools it can inspire younger generations to stand up and against injustice and racism.

- **Kellsey Jones** - *SGA Treasurer* (Grade 8)
- **Jamil Taylor** - *SGA President* (Grade 8)
- **Ziah Cragway** - *SGA Delegate* (Grade 8)

The Ruby Bridges walk showed how diverse Maryland can be and even though we're a diverse state we still accept every single person. The Ruby Bridges walk can have a large impact on Maryland like kids can learn about the past and if it weren't for Ruby we would still be in segregated schools.

- **Marcelo Silverio-Pucheta** - *SGA Delegate* (Grade 8)

The Ruby Bridges walk should happen around Maryland. In our school, the walk created a sense of community with everyone, with the neighbors and the classmates. Cars stopped and cheered us on, and stopped for us. This could create a reason to unite around Maryland onto one thing. This could show other countries our culture, and that we aren't some bad school. It can show them that we are something.

- **Matthew Kennel** - *SGA Vice President* (Grade 8)

## COMMODORE TO COLLEGE: 100% FOR 100%

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The walk showed how Ruby Bridges made my school what it is today and made it so diverse to the point where anywhere you walk you'll see somebody from any part of the world.

Ruby Bridges had changed our school systems so much, especially in Maryland, which they began the process of desegregation in 1955. My research shows me that Baltimore was one of the first school systems to desegregate voluntarily.

The Ruby Bridges walk had been practiced at many schools and should be practiced at *all* schools. The Ruby Bridges walk is powerful and impactful because it lets everybody realize how far different school systems have come and how they are still changing to this day. Although we still have school bullying, underpaid teachers, and more. Overall, this shows where the Maryland school was at the beginning and how just one person had changed all of it.

- **Saniyah Kirkland** - SGA/Safety Patrol Delegate (Grade 7)

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# **HB0493 Timothy Meyer MRES PTO written testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Timothy Meyer

Position: FAV



**HB0493 - Public Schools - Commemorative Day – Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day – Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
FAVORABLE**

March 18, 2025

Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

As the longtime PTO president of Mount Rainier Elementary School in Prince George's County, **I respectfully request a favorable recommendation and Senate passage of HB0493**, a bill to designate November 14 as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in Maryland and establish educational resources to help teach Ruby's story.

I have been a PTO leader for 6 years – and Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day is one of the most meaningful, impactful events our school has done. We have learned that when students and families *walk* together, they *talk* together. Walking brings communities closer together.

But Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day is much more than a walking event or ceremonial day.

It is part of Maryland's history – a heroic, resilient example of the values we're most proud of. Each of you walk past Thurgood Marshall as you enter the Capitol – and Ruby's story is an important continuation of his legacy and his work on *Brown v. Board of Education* to make quality, equal education available to all and ensure every student feels welcome.

At Mount Rainier Elementary, we have made every effort to elevate this event beyond being ceremonial. Our PTO purchased and donated more than a dozen books either written by Ruby or telling her story. We invite special guests and elected officials to read to students and teach Ruby's story to every classroom. Hallways are decorated with Ruby Bridges-inspired student artwork. This past November, we partnered with a local business, Ethnicitees, to design custom shirts honoring Ruby.

Students instantly understand the significance of Ruby's story, as well as the lessons it can teach us today. In one class this past November, we discussed how Ruby is proof that *kids* can be superheroes too, each with the power to change the world.

Our kids need a few of those superheroes right now. Because what Ruby *really* taught is the lesson that in our schools, every child belongs, every family must be welcome, and all of us are equal. Ruby Bridges and her walk to school proved that a few courageous steps forward can change the world – and for Maryland students, she is the perfect hero for this moment.

In recent years, California and New Jersey have passed similar legislation to celebrate Ruby Bridges on November 14. Oregon's legislature is currently debating a Ruby Bridges commemorative day. What sets Maryland apart is our opportunity to be the first state to both celebrate Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and formally incorporate an educational component.

I want to give special thanks to Delegate Diana Fennell for her support of this event and sponsorship of this legislation. We had the pleasure of hosting Delegate Fennell at our 2023 and 2024 Ruby Bridges Walk to School Days, and are honored to work with her to bring this event to other school communities in Maryland. We are equally grateful to Senator Joanne Benson for her support of this legislation in the Senate, plus more than twenty Delegates who joined this effort as sponsors.

We also want to recognize and thank the Safe Routes Partnership, a national advocacy organization that works to advance safe walking to and from schools, for their support of HB0493. And we thank the Good Intentions Foundation and other groups who have offered favorable testimony on behalf this bill. Finally, one of the most rewarding parts of advocating on behalf of HB0493 has been working with Commodore John Rodgers, a school in Baltimore City whose Student Government helped plan their own Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day last November. Being able to work with their faculty and provide their students the opportunity to reflect on their own Ruby Bridges experiences and practice civic engagement is a reminder that the positive impact this event has on students is the most compelling reason for HB0493's passage. I encourage each of you to read these student reflections, which have been submitted as separate written testimony by their faculty advisor.

Thank you for consideration of this bill, and I respectfully urge a favorable recommendation for HB0493 and Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy Meyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Timothy Meyer

President, Mount Rainier Elementary PTO