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BILL: HB 493  
TITLE: Public Schools - Commemorative Day - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day  
DATE: February 12, 2025  
POSITION: Oppose  
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee  
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 493.

This bill designates November 14th each year as “Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day” to commemorate Ruby Bridges, who, on November 14th, 1960, became the first African American student to integrate an all-white elementary school in New Orleans, Louisiana. In accordance with the bill, each county board of education shall develop and implement a program of education for Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day as well as model content for a program of education for Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

PSSAM supports the intent of this bill to commemorate Ruby Bridges and her historic role in desegregating public education. However, Maryland superintendents have concerns regarding legislative mandates, including policies, programs, and curricula for local school systems. Each community and school system face unique challenges and opportunities, and we believe that decisions about programs like this are best made at the local level.

Local superintendents strongly value the inclusion of information regarding the civil rights movement in the educational experiences of our students. In fact, more than half of the school systems offer an elective course in African American History at the high school level. While we do not support this curricular mandate, it certainly does not diminish the importance of teaching Ruby Bridges’ story or exploring the broader historical context of school desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement. Additionally, many aspects of African American history are integrated

into the broader Social Studies curriculum, including courses in World History, World Cultures and Geography, United States History, and American Government, as well as Social Studies instruction at the elementary level.

We ask the Legislature to uphold the longstanding process of allowing local superintendents, along with their local boards of education, to make programmatic and curriculum choices.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 493 and kindly requests an **unfavorable** committee report.