



Council on American-Islamic Relations

CAIR Office in Maryland

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January 30, 2025

Honorable Chair Vanessa Atterbeary
House Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony Favorable for HB493 Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), I thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill 493 Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 493, which would establish November 14 as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in Maryland's public schools.

As a civil rights and advocacy organization, CAIR Maryland is deeply committed to advancing equity, inclusion, and historical awareness in our schools. This bill aligns with our mission to promote justice and combat discrimination by ensuring that students recognize and learn from the struggles and achievements of pioneers like Ruby Bridges.

Ruby Bridges' courageous act of integrating an all-white elementary school in 1960 marked a pivotal moment in American history and serves as an enduring symbol of resilience in the face of systemic racism. Establishing a designated day of commemoration will not only honor her legacy but also encourage meaningful discussions about civil rights, racial justice, and diversity among students.

House Bill 493's requirement that each county board develop and implement a program of education ensures that students across Maryland will have access to historical context, structured reflection, and community engagement opportunities. We particularly support the bill's inclusion of:

- A symbolic walk to school to help students engage in experiential learning;
- Instructional materials that highlight the history of school desegregation and ongoing struggles for racial justice;
- Opportunities for discussion and artistic expression to deepen understanding and civic engagement.

At a time when racial disparities persist in education and society, initiatives like Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day are crucial in fostering empathy, tolerance, and a more inclusive learning environment. By passing this bill, Maryland can take an important step toward reaffirming its commitment to civil rights education and ensuring that students recognize their role in shaping a just society.

We urge the Committee to give House Bill 493 a favorable report. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Respectfully,

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