



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

House Bill 486 - Public Schools - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day - Establishment

House Ways and Means Committee

February 11, 2026

SUPPORT

The Takoma Park Youth Council supports and urges consideration of House Bill 486 because it celebrates Ruby Bridges and directly relates to the community we represent. It commemorates our nation's first steps to integrating schools. Ruby Bridges demonstrated courage at just six years old, paving the way for generations of students to learn in integrated classrooms. Her story reminds us that access to education and belonging should not be taken for granted. We cannot imagine going to a classroom that is not diverse. As Takoma Park residents, we are so grateful for the community we have. Having diverse communities allows you to learn a lot and gives you a sense of compassion. Establishing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day creates an opportunity for students to physically walk to school while reflecting on the progress our nation has made toward equity.

The City of Takoma Park has nearly 18,000 residents within 2.4 square miles and is proud of its rich diversity and walkable communities. A majority of the Takoma Park Youth Council members speak two or three languages, reflecting the backgrounds that shape our community. The City has made significant efforts to ensure that all residents, regardless of background, feel safe and supported. Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day reflects the values that Takoma Park holds: inclusion, opportunity, and community connection. Schools within our community, including Rolling Terrace Elementary School and East Silver Spring Elementary School, have previously organized Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day events, demonstrating the positive impact of the walk.

This bill aligns with Takoma Park's commitment to safe and active transportation. Takoma Park has added bike lanes, and movement is very encouraged in our community. There are many positive impacts of walking, such as improving physical health, mood enhancement, sleep quality, academic readiness, and focus. By connecting pedestrian awareness with Ruby Bridges' legacy, this bill encourages students to safely participate in a shared experience that honors history while strengthening our sense of community.

House Bill 486 provides materials and opportunities for schools to teach students, organize walking events, and honor Ruby Bridges. With these supports, schools could have educational stations along walking routes, allowing students to learn about Ruby Bridges and civil rights. By commemorating Ruby Bridges while promoting safe routes to school, Maryland affirms its commitment to inclusion, education, and student well-being. The Takoma Park Youth Council respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 486.

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