



Office of The Mayor Celina Benitez

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

February 9, 2026

RE: Support for House Bill 486

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldman and member of the Ways and means committee:

On behalf of the City of Mount Rainier, I am writing to express our strong support for **House Bill 486**, which designates November 14 as “Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day” and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day the second Wed in October each year.

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. It also raises awareness on Pedestrian Safety saving lives.

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. We have also reduce speed in our city to 20mph and have been working to continue creating safe streets that are walkable, bikeable for our residents and visitors. Raising Pedestrian Safety awareness in the state will continue helping reach the goal of get to the zero pedestrian fatalities.

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 and safety in our schools and community.

House Bill 486 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. As well as also raise awareness to Pedestrian Safety and saving lives. We urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass this bill and join us in fostering a more just, safe and inclusive future for our student and community.

We urge the committee to issue a **favorable report on HB 486** 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

Sincerely,

Celina R. Benitez

Mayor Celina R. Benitez, City of Mount Rainier