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February 17, 2025

Senate Committee on Rules

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the MWVCOG Board, I ask that you support SB 450 wherein Oregon will annually recognize November 14th as **Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day**.

Ruby Bridges was born in 1954, the year of the Supreme Court's Brown v Board of Education decision that state laws supporting racial segregation in public schools were unconstitutional. In 1960, Ruby was one of six Black children in Louisiana chosen to attend an all-white elementary school. On November 14th, 1960, 6-year-old Ruby Bridges walked into the Willam Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, flanked by four deputy U.S. marshals through a crowd of angry demonstrators. For the next week, segregationist protests and riots arose in the streets of New Orleans, and white families pulled out their own children from the school Ruby attended. But Ruby kept attending Frantz Elementary school for the rest of the year and the years after that. Today, Ruby is chair of the Ruby Bridges Foundation, formed in 1999 to promote "the values of tolerance, respect, and appreciation of all differences." Ruby's story is an inspiration to all children.

The first Ruby Bridges Day celebration was organized in 2018, when fifth graders from Martin Elementary School in South San Francisco, California, learned about Ruby and asked their school board to pass a resolution making November 14th as "Ruby Bridges Day." In 2021, the California State Senate passed an official resolution proclaiming November 14th as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day.

Today, several school districts in Oregon and throughout America celebrate November 14th each year as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. In 2024, the Salem-Keizer Safe Routes to School program -- which is operated by staff at the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments -- assisted eleven elementary schools in the Salem-Keizer School District to organize walks at their schools. This is the third year of supporting this event with Salem-Keizer Public Schools, and we expect more schools to hold walks each year.

We encourage your support for SB 450.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Davidson".

Ian Davidson, MWVCOG Board Chair