

**TRAVIS NELSON**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
HOUSE DISTRICT 44  
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Testimony in Support for SB 450**

Chair Bowman, Vice Chair Drazen, Vice-Chair Pham and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Travis Nelson, and I am the State Representative for House District 44 - North and Northeast Portland, and I am here today in strong support of SB 450. This bill is an opportunity to honor Ruby Bridges' courage and perseverance while reinforcing the values of inclusion, anti-racism, and education in Oregon.

How do you truly capture the significance of Ruby Bridges in just a few words? Most of us know her from the iconic photo, just six years old, being escorted by U.S. Marshals to William Frantz Elementary School in Louisiana. In that moment, she became the first Black child to integrate a previously all-white school. She stepped into history as a symbol of courage, hope, and the fight for civil rights.

At just six years old—only 65 years ago—Ruby faced relentless racism, threats, and isolation. Grown adults lined the streets, hurling slurs, and physical threats, protesting her very presence. Most teachers refused to teach her. No child should ever have to endure that. And yet, despite it all, Ruby showed up. Every. Single. Day. While many of us have found reasons to avoid school, she walked through those doors with a bravery that many adults could never muster.

Today, communities across the country honor her legacy with Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, using it as an opportunity to engage in discussions about equality, social change, and the enduring impact of education – all vital aspects of our shared humanity.

Like Ruby I am a Louisiana native and so are my parents. In 1970.... yes, in 1970! My [parents' schools in North Louisiana](#) fully desegregated. I was born in 1978 and grew up hearing stories of how the colored school my mother went to was burned by the KKK, crosses were burned in the community and how many of the white parents withdrew their kids from the school district rather than have them learn next to a colored kid. My mother has stated that integration tore her town apart. Stories like my mother's and Ruby's are American history and deserve to be remembered.

Recognizing Ruby Bridges Day in Oregon is long overdue. It would be a meaningful tribute to an extraordinary woman and a testament to our commitment to equality. As we continue the work toward justice, I urge you to support SB 450 and ensure Ruby's legacy is honored in our schools and communities.

Sincerely,

State Representative Travis Nelson  
House District 44, North/NE Portland