

FAVORABLE
House Bill 493
Public Schools – Commemorative Day – Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
March 20, 2025

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 493, which would designate November 14 as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day to commemorate Ruby Bridges, who, on November 14, 1960, became the first African American student to integrate an all-white school in New Orleans, Louisiana. It would also direct the State Department of Education to develop model content for a program of education for Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

We appreciate the sponsor's effort to highlight a pivotal moment in this nation's painful history of school segregation. We wholeheartedly agree that educators should have access to high-quality resources and guidance to teach a complete account of U.S. history. To that end, we support this bill's directive to MSDE to create model content like lesson plans and discussion guides on Ruby Bridges. We are hopeful that these resources will be made available to educators to enrich their teaching on the history of school integration and the civil rights movement.

MSEA has longstanding concerns about legislatively mandating the implementation of specific curriculum and programming. It is the duty of the State Board, county boards, and educators to set instructional standards holistically and shape the scope and sequence of content, respectively. Additions made through the General Assembly may condense the time available for each topic in the 180-day school year. We therefore appreciate the sponsor's amendment to remove section (B), which directed the manner of local implementation. Instead, we would urge that efforts toward local implementation are approached through county boards with educator input.

It is more important than ever that students have access to an accurate and honest history education. **We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 493.**