

Testimony on SB526 – FAVORABLE

Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee – March 4, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, EEE Committee members and Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

I write in strong support of SB526 to honor and celebrate Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in Maryland.

I am a parent and the PTO President at Mount Rainier Elementary School, where we have been celebrating Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day for several years. As a parent whose child has participated in Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, I have seen firsthand the impact this day has on students. Walking to school while learning about Ruby Bridges helps make history real and accessible for young people. For my child, the experience sparked meaningful conversations about fairness, courage, and why equal access to education matters. It reinforced the idea that our differences make us stronger as a community—and that we never want to go back to a time when children were excluded or denied opportunity.

Ruby Bridges is more than an American Civil Rights hero. She is an enduring example of courage, resilience, and the importance of equally accessible public education whose story is especially relevant to students today. And Ruby's story is an important continuation of Maryland native Thurgood Marshall's legacy on *Brown v. Board of Education*—decided in 1954, the same year Ruby was born—to ensure that quality, equal education is available to all.

Events like Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day also help raise awareness about the important issue of school pedestrian safety. As a parent, walking to school with my child highlights both the benefits of walkability and the real concerns families have about traffic safety and safe routes to school. Combining this historic moment with encouragement for safer, more walkable communities makes this day especially meaningful. During a year when budgets are tight, passing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day legislation will deliver a unifying education win that helps make students safer at almost no fiscal cost.

Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day helps teach students valuable lessons, improves safety, and brings communities closer together.

Similar Ruby Bridges legislation passed the House of Delegates with overwhelming bipartisan support last year—and this is the session to give SB526 an up-or-down vote and pass it in the Maryland Senate.

I ask you to give SB526—Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day—a FAVORABLE report.

Nicole de la Torre

President

Mount Rainier Elementary School PTO