

**FAVORABLE**

**Senate Bill 526**

**Public Schools – Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment**

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**Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association offers this favorable testimony on Senate Bill 526, 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 designate the second Wednesday in October each year as Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day to promote safe pedestrian routes to and from school. This bill would direct the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop model content to be made publicly available to educators for Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and for Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness 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 44 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. Furthermore, we wholeheartedly agree that educators should have access to high-quality resources and guidance to teach a complete account of U.S. history. 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.

We also recognize the importance of pedestrian safety for students, and educators benefit from having access to a breadth of timely resources that help students learn more about the world around them and prepare for the future.

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 Senate Bill 526.**