

Determination: Favorable After review of Senate Bill 526 Public Schools Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day Establishment, and weighing it against my record of municipal leadership, veteran service, civic education advocacy, and commitment to strengthening democratic participation and safe communities, the strongest and most defensible position is Favorable.

Why This legislation advances both civic education and student safety in a manner consistent with the responsibilities shared by schools, families, and local governments. The recognition of Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day honors a defining moment in American history while providing an educational framework that connects civil rights history to present day responsibility and community awareness. Equally important, Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day promotes collaboration between school systems and local jurisdictions to encourage safer routes for students traveling to and from school. As a municipal leader, I have consistently supported initiatives that improve public safety through education, transparency, and community engagement rather than unfunded mandates. The bill appropriately focuses on education, resource development, and voluntary collaboration rather than imposing construction or fiscal obligations on local governments. This balance strengthens participation while respecting local operational realities.

Testimony Chair and Members of the Committee, My name is The Honorable Dr Cashenna A Cross. I submit this testimony as a municipal leader, United States Air Force veteran, and advocate for youth engagement, civic education, and community safety. Senate Bill 526 reflects the understanding that education extends beyond textbooks. The story of Ruby Bridges represents courage, equal access to education, and the responsibility of communities to protect children as they pursue opportunity. Establishing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day creates an annual opportunity for students to learn history while actively engaging with their communities. The designation of Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day further strengthens this effort by encouraging collaboration between schools and local governments to promote safe pedestrian practices. Awareness and education are among the most effective tools available to prevent injury and build lifelong safety habits for young people. Importantly, this legislation provides guidance and resources without creating additional financial burdens for local jurisdictions. It encourages partnership, learning, and proactive safety awareness while allowing communities flexibility in implementation. As someone who has worked across municipal government, education advocacy, and community engagement, I have seen how programs rooted in shared history and public safety strengthen trust between institutions and residents. This bill supports that goal. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 526. Respectfully submitted, The Honorable Dr Cashenna A Cross Municipal Leader and Public Servant