

SB0526_2026_Testimony_Dr_Cashenna_Cross.pdf

Uploaded by: Dr Cashenna A Cross

Position: FAV

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

SB526_FAV_MOST.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Ellie Mitchell

Position: FAV



SB526 - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee – March 4, 2026
Position: Favorable

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST also serves as the backbone organization for the Maryland Coalition for Community Schools and MENTOR Maryland | DC.

On behalf of the Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST), I write in strong support of SB526 to honor and celebrate Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in Maryland.

As Maryland's statewide afterschool network, MOST works to advance positive youth development by ensuring young people have access to safe, supportive, and enriching learning environments — in school and beyond the school day. Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day aligns deeply with that mission.

Ruby Bridges is not only a civil rights icon; she is a powerful example of courage, resilience, and the transformative impact of equitable access to public education. Her story provides an age-appropriate opportunity for young people to explore themes of belonging, bravery, justice, and community responsibility. These are core protective factors in positive youth development — helping young people build identity, confidence, empathy, and civic awareness.

For Maryland's afterschool, summer, mentoring, and community school partners, this day is more than symbolic. It offers a meaningful platform to engage youth in conversations about history, equity, and their own power to create change. It also reinforces the importance of safe routes to school and community safety — ensuring that young people can physically access the educational spaces designed to support their growth.

In a year when fiscal resources are limited, SB526 represents a high-impact, low-cost opportunity to promote student safety, civic learning, and community connection across the state. Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day strengthens the very conditions that help young people thrive.

For these reasons, MOST respectfully urges a FAVORABLE report on SB526.

Ellie Mitchell, Director
MOST / MD4CS / MENTOR MD|DC
emitchell@mostnetwork.org

SB0526 Written Testimony_Safe Routes Partnership_K

Uploaded by: Kori Johnson

Position: FAV



**SB0526 - Public Schools – Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day Establishment -
Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**

FAVORABLE

March 2, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong favor of SB0526 which would designate an official Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in Maryland. I am supporting this bill as a Maryland resident, and on behalf of my workplace, the Safe Routes Partnership. I was born and raised in Columbia and am a proud graduate of Howard County Public Schools. As a child growing up in Columbia, I had the privilege of being a part of a diverse, multicultural community, living in walkable neighborhoods, and receiving a top-tier public school education. Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day did not exist when I was growing up, but I see how my experiences align with the goals of this event, which are to inspire constructive dialogue around anti-racism and kindness, to encourage students to walk and roll to school, and to honor the living legacy of Ruby Bridges and her impact on education and civil rights. By officially recognizing November 14th as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, we can show that Maryland continues to be a great place for students to live, play, and learn.

Currently, I am a Senior Program and Engagement Manager at the Safe Routes Partnership, a national organization that works to make it safer and easier for people to walk, bike, and roll to community destinations like schools, parks, grocery stores, and libraries. In my role at the Partnership, I help communities develop and implement Safe Routes to School initiatives, including events like Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. Each year on November 14th, hundreds of thousands of students across the country commemorate Ruby Bridges' historic act by walking, biking, and rolling to their school and discussing how they can make positive changes in their communities. Over the past two years, our organization awarded \$80,000 in grant funding to assist communities in organizing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day celebrations including four here in Maryland. In 2025, over 2000 Maryland students participated in Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day celebrations, joining the 800,000 young people across the country who participated in their own local events. One of our Maryland grantees commented, "[Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day] walk unified our community and reinforced a powerful truth: every



student deserves to feel seen, empowered, and worthy of the education they receive.”

This funding is part of a larger initiative to grow the Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day movement. Each year on November 14th, hundreds of thousands of students across the country commemorate Ruby Bridges’ historic act by walking, biking, and rolling to their school and discussing how they can make positive changes in their communities. In recent years, California, New Jersey, and Oregon have officially designated November 14th as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, demonstrating their commitment to inclusive, accessible streets, transportation safety, and education equity. Now, Maryland has the opportunity to join California, New Jersey, and Oregon as national leaders in the Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day movement.

I strongly urge the Committee and the full Senate to pass SB0526 this legislative session. With the passage of this bill, Maryland can keep Ruby’s legacy alive and empower the next generation of changemakers.

Thank you for your consideration!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kori Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kori Johnson

Senior Manager, Program and Engagement

The Safe Routes Partnership



SB526_MSEA_Lamb_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV

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

March 4, 2026

Lauren Lamb

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.**

Public Testimony_SB526.pdf

Uploaded by: Lien Hoang

Position: FAV

ALONZO T. WASHINGTON
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Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 4, 2026

The Honorable Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland State Senate
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: SB526 – Establishment of Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 526, legislation that establishes an educational and commemorative Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and a safety-focused Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day.

Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day commemorates one of the most significant moments in American civil rights history, the day in 1960 when a six-year-old girl walked through a hostile crowd to integrate an all-white New Orleans elementary school. That story is not just national history, but it is Maryland's history, rooted in the same legal legacy as Thurgood Marshall and *Brown v. Board of Education*. Designating November 14 as a formal observance connects that history to a living act: walking to school together. Simultaneously, pedestrian injuries and fatalities near Maryland schools continue to occur with no coordinated statewide response.

Maryland would join California, New Jersey, and Oregon in formally designating Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, and Maryland would be the first state to have more than a ceremonial day and require an educational component with civil rights and social justice resources. Events like Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day help make students and their families safer, bring communities closer together, and help save lives.

As for pedestrian safety, the Children's Safety Network estimates that an average of 67, 124 child pedestrian injuries occur each year nationally. In Maryland, in November 2023, students Sky Sosa and Shalom Mbah were struck and killed by a van while crossing a crosswalk on their way to Riverdale Elementary School. Their deaths prompted the Prince George's County Council to establish a formal School Pedestrian Safety Workgroup in April 2024. Among its 18 final recommendations, the Workgroup explicitly called for establishing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day (November 14) as an official County and PGCPs event.

This bill establishes two statewide observances within Maryland Public Schools, Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day (annually on November 14th) and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day (second Wednesday in October). The legislation takes effect July 1, 2026, which allows ample time for coordination and voluntary local adoption. Resources would be provided by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), where resource development is centralized and voluntary for local adoption, limiting fiscal exposure. This bill also encourages leveraging existing safety grants and partnerships rather than creating new programs.

Ruby Bridges is in the curriculum, but anchored to nothing. Other holidays, like Veterans' Day and Lincoln's Birthday, are all codified in Maryland law. Creating a commemorative day for Ruby Bridges celebrates civil rights wins and Bridges as a key figure of the movement.

This bill does not require additional costs or resources. Any of the materials mentioned in the bill already exist and can easily be adapted to Maryland. This bill also does not undermine Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and avoids any specific mandates.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 526.

With Regards,

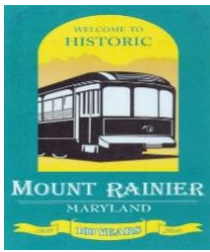
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alonzo T. Washington', written in a cursive style.

Alonzo T. Washington
Maryland State Senate
District 22

Support for Senate Bill 526.pdf

Uploaded by: Mayor Celina Benitez

Position: FAV



Office of The Mayor Celina R. Benitez

1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712 Telephone: (301) 985-6585 MountRainierMD.org

March 1, 2026

RE: Support for Senate Bill 526

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment committee:

I am writing to express our strong support for **Senate Bill 526**, which designates November 14 as “Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day” and the second Wednesday in October as Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day each year.

This important legislation not only honors Ruby Bridges’ historic role in desegregating public schools but also provides an opportunity for students across the state to engage in meaningful discussions about civil rights, diversity, and social justice. It also raises awareness on Pedestrian Safety, saving lives.

Our community has already demonstrated a strong commitment to this initiative. The Mount Rainier Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) has been an active participant in recognizing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, and in the following year, Thomas Stone Elementary also received an award for organizing their own walk. These efforts reflect the enthusiasm and dedication of our schools in fostering conversations about equality, history, and the power of civic action. We have also reduced the speed limit in our city to 20mph and have been working to continue creating safe streets that are walkable and bikeable for our residents and visitors. Raising Pedestrian Safety awareness in the state will continue helping reach the goal of achieving zero pedestrian fatalities.

Additionally, as Mayor of Mount Rainier, I have taken official steps to support this initiative by issuing a proclamation declaring “Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day” in our city. This proclamation underscores our city’s dedication to honoring Ruby Bridges’ courage and to reinforcing the importance of inclusive education and safety in our schools and community.

Senate Bill 526 will further institutionalize these efforts by ensuring that every public school in Maryland has the opportunity to commemorate Ruby Bridges and engage students in learning about the ongoing struggle for educational equity. As well as raising awareness of pedestrian safety and saving lives.

We urge for a **favorable report on Senate Bill 526** and join us in fostering a more just, safe, and inclusive future for our students and community.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership. Please feel free to contact me at 301-985-6585 or via email MayorBenitez@MountRainierMd.org if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Celina R. Benitez

Mayor Celina R. Benitez, City of Mount Rainier.

SB526 - Nicole de la Torre.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicole de la Torre

Position: FAV

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

2026 MASBHC SB 526 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 526 – Public Schools - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day - Establishment

Hearing Date: March 4, 2026

Position: Support

The Maryland Assembly on School-Based Health Care (MASBHC) supports *Senate Bill 526 – Public Schools - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day – Establishment*. The bill establishes the Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and the Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day. MASBHC appreciates the bill sponsor highlighting the importance of Ruby Bridges as the first Black student to integrate a white elementary school in Louisiana. Ruby Bridges is part of an important legacy, that includes Maryland’s own Thurgood Marshall, in civil rights history. The sponsor also lifts up the importance of pedestrian safety for students which is a critical component of Maryland’s Vision Zero initiative.ⁱ As an association representing ninety school-based health centers in Maryland, student pedestrian safety is a priority for us.

We ask for a favorable report on this legislation. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

ⁱ <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/>

2026 MASHN SB 526 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV

Maryland Association of School Health Nurses



Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 526 – Public Schools - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day - Establishment

Hearing Date: March 4, 2026

Position: Support

The Maryland Association of School Health Nurses (MASHN) supports *Senate Bill 526 – Public Schools - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day - Establishment*. The bill establishes the Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and the Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day. Ruby Bridges was the first Black student to integrate an elementary school in Louisiana in 1960.ⁱ MASHN supports honoring Ruby Bridges’ contribution to advance equity in education. MASHN also supports recognizing the importance of safety for students walking to schools. In Maryland, 166 students have been killed as pedestrians between 2000 and 2014 as part of a concerning national trend.ⁱⁱ

We ask for a favorable vote. If we can provide any information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

ⁱ <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ruby-bridges>

ⁱⁱ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7098840/>

Takoma Park 2026 - SB 526 FAV - Ruby Bridges Walk

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FAV



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

Senate Bill 526 - Public Schools - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day - Establishment

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 4, 2026

SUPPORT

The Takoma Park Youth Council supports and urges consideration of Senate Bill 526 because it celebrates Ruby Bridges and directly relates to the community we represent. It commemorates our nation's first steps to integrating schools. Ruby Bridges demonstrated courage at just six years old, paving the way for generations of students to learn in integrated classrooms. Her story reminds us that access to education and belonging should not be taken for granted. We cannot imagine going to a classroom that is not diverse. As Takoma Park residents, we are so grateful for the community we have. Having diverse communities allows you to learn a lot and gives you a sense of compassion. Establishing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day creates an opportunity for students to physically walk to school while reflecting on the progress our nation has made toward equity.

The City of Takoma Park has nearly 18,000 residents within 2.4 square miles and is proud of its rich diversity and walkable communities. A majority of the Takoma Park Youth Council members speak two or three languages, reflecting the backgrounds that shape our community. The City has made significant efforts to ensure that all residents, regardless of background, feel safe and supported. Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day reflects the values that Takoma Park holds: inclusion, opportunity, and community connection. Schools within our community, including Rolling Terrace Elementary School and East Silver Spring Elementary School, have previously organized Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day events, demonstrating the positive impact of the walk.

This bill aligns with Takoma Park's commitment to safe and active transportation. Takoma Park has added bike lanes, and movement is very encouraged in our community. There are many positive impacts of walking, such as improving physical health, mood enhancement, sleep quality, academic readiness, and focus. By connecting pedestrian awareness with Ruby Bridges' legacy, this bill encourages students to safely participate in a shared experience that honors history while strengthening our sense of community.

Senate Bill 526 provides materials and opportunities for schools to teach students, organize walking events, and honor Ruby Bridges. With these supports, schools could have educational stations along walking routes, allowing students to learn about Ruby Bridges and civil rights. By commemorating Ruby Bridges while promoting safe routes to school, Maryland affirms its commitment to inclusion, education, and student well-being. The Takoma Park Youth Council respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 526.

City Contact: Talisha Searcy, Mayor
talishas@takomaparkmd.gov

SB526_PGCC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700
County Council

March 5, 2026

Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Senate Bill 526 — Public Schools - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day - Establishment

POSITION: Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

The Prince George's County Council respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 526 - Public Schools - Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day – Establishment.

Prince George's County is home to one of the most diverse student populations in the State of Maryland. Our public schools reflect the strength, resilience, and rich cultural heritage of our communities. Recognizing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day provides an important opportunity for students to learn about the courage it took to dismantle barriers in public education and to reflect on the ongoing responsibility we share to ensure schools remain welcoming, inclusive, and equitable spaces for every child. For a county that has long championed civil rights, educational access, and opportunity, this observance aligns directly with our values and the lived experiences of many of our families.

Equally important, the emphasis on pedestrian awareness and safety resonates deeply at the local level. Prince George's County continues to prioritize safe routes to school, pedestrian infrastructure improvements, and traffic safety initiatives around school zones. With a large number of students who walk, ride bicycles or use public transportation to get to school, promoting pedestrian safety is not symbolic — it is a practical and urgent matter of public health and student well-being. Raising awareness through coordinated statewide recognition supports the local work already underway in our communities to reduce accidents and create safer environments for our children.

Senate Bill 526 connects history, education, and student safety in a way that reflects the realities of our County. It provides a framework that supports conversations about equity while reinforcing the shared responsibility we have to protect students as they travel to and from school. For Prince George's County, these are not abstract ideals — they are daily commitments.

For these reasons, the Prince George's County Council respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 526.

Thank you for your consideration.

Prepared by: Ashlar Government Relations on behalf of Prince George's County Council

Wayne K. Curry Administration Building – Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772