

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 486  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Fennell)

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

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This bill designates November 14 each year 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 elementary school in New Orleans, Louisiana. The bill also designates the second Wednesday in October each year as “Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day” to encourage local school systems, in collaboration with the county or municipality, to promote safe pedestrian routes to and from schools. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must make resource materials publicly available to assist local school systems in planning each designated observance day, as specified. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** MSDE can make resources publicly available for the programs using existing resources; however, resources may be temporarily diverted from current priorities.

**Local Effect:** None. However, local school systems may choose to implement a program of education based on the resources made available by MSDE. Any impact is at the discretion of local school systems.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day resource materials provided by MSDE may include instructional materials, including those specified, and must include

resources to assist teachers to engage in discussions about civil rights and social justice. The Maryland School Pedestrian Awareness Day resource materials provided by MSDE may include materials on specified topics.

**Current Law:** The public schools must devote a part of the day to appropriate exercises for the following days: Washington’s Birthday; Lincoln’s Birthday; Veterans’ Day; Columbus Day; Arbor Day; Black History Month with an emphasis on Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass and the contributions they made in the fight against slavery; and any other day of national significance.

The [Maryland Standards and Frameworks in Social Studies](#) provides students with several age-appropriate opportunities to learn about Ruby Bridges and civil rights, including those for grade 5 social studies, middle school U.S. history, and high school U.S. history and U.S. Government. State Frameworks are defined as supporting documents and provide guidance for implementing the State Standards in Social Studies, which are reviewed and adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education every eight years.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 1003 and HB 493 of 2025.

**Designated Cross File:** SB 526 (Senator A. Washington) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Prince George’s County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; St. Mary’s County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 6, 2026  
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