

ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN'S
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION No. 159

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 14, 2024

The Assembly Community Development and Women's Affairs Committee reports favorably Assembly Joint Resolution No. 159.

This joint resolution designates November 14 of each year as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in the State of New Jersey.

Ruby Bridges was born on September 8, 1954 and was raised in New Orleans, Louisiana by parents Lucille and Abon Bridges. In the same year, the United States Supreme Court issued the landmark ruling in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, ending racial segregation in public schools. However, states across the South, including Louisiana, failed to integrate their public schools. This led to a federal court order for Louisiana to desegregate their public schools beginning on November 14, 1960.

On November 14, 1960, Ruby Bridges and her mother were escorted by federal marshals to the William Frantz Elementary School where Ruby faced violent protesters. The violence of the protesters, blatant racism from parents, and forced isolation plagued Ruby Bridges' first year of attendance at William Frantz Elementary.

Despite these hardships, Ruby Bridges never missed a day of school. By the end of her first year, the school decided to admit more African American children the following year. Ruby Bridges' act of bravery inspired America and led to a commemorative piece by famous artist Norman Rockwell titled "The Problem We Must All Live With."

Ruby Bridges became a lifelong activist for racial equality. She established The Ruby Bridges Foundation in 1999, which uses educational initiatives to promote tolerance and unity among schoolchildren. Ruby Bridges has also gained numerous accolades for her life's work, including the Carter G. Woodson Book Award and the honorary title of deputy federal marshal. By setting aside November 14 of each year as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, the citizens of New Jersey can celebrate the courage of young Ruby Bridges and the impact her actions had on African American children across America.