

Latest News

DOJ Statewide Investigation: In October, the U.S. Department of Justice announced an investigation into Texas' five state secure juvenile facilities. Texas Appleseed and our partner, Disability Rights Texas, filed a



complaint in late 2020 urging an investigation. The investigation is being conducted pursuant to the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. The DOJ will look into various

areas of possible maltreatment and failings, including physical and sexual abuse of children in the facilities; harms from excessive use of chemical restraints on children; harms from excessive use of isolation of children; as well as mental health care treatment and services. Read more here: www.texasappleseed.org/juvenile-justice.

Foster Care Reports: Two Co-Monitors, including Deborah Fowler, the Executive Director of Texas Appleseed, were appointed to observe and report on court-ordered reforms of Texas' foster care system. The *M.D. vs. Abbott* monitoring team filed reports in April, May and September, written and researched, in part, by the Texas Appleseed team. Two of the reports focused on the crisis related to children without placement, and spurred the State to agree to a panel of experts to recommend solutions to the crisis.

Defeating Prop A: Prop A, on Austin's November ballot, would have required the city to move funding out of other social services and supports and into the police department budget for arbitrary staffing. We worked with a broad coalition of stakeholders, including EMS and firefighters, to defeat the proposition. Texas Appleseed's get-out-the-vote campaign included over 70,000 phone calls, knocks on more than 15,000 doors, and a text messaging initiative, helping bring an additional 18,800 people to the polls to help stop Prop A.



Predatory Lending: In our Texas payday and auto title lending data review, spanning Q1 2012 - Q2 2021, predatory practices continued, including higher fees collected for fewer dollars lent and high average annual percentage rates. A concerning finding is that car repossessions by auto title lenders are skyrocketing.



Letter Briefs: Our first recent letter brief was in collaboration with other organizations in response to an Attorney General opinion request related to the lawfulness of teaching anti-racism in Texas public schools. Prohibiting anti-racism education in Texas schools would suppress educational efforts that are critically needed to confront and address racism and discrimination. We argue that the U.S. and Texas Constitutions and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 support the presence of an anti-racist curriculum in schools across Texas. Our second letter brief was developed with three other Appleseed centers in response to Attorney General opinion requests related to the constitutionality of guidance prohibiting school discipline policies that have a disparate impact on students of color. We urge state officials to honor 2014 national guidance, which set out federal law requiring that the administration of school discipline be nondiscriminatory.

Dallas ISD: In 2020, DISD reviewed practices that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline, including disparities in exclusionary discipline for students of color, and announced a change in district policy that would end discretionary classroom removals across grades K-12. The Education Justice Project joined a coalition in Dallas to support DISD's effort. Currently, the district uses "reset rooms" to avoid discretionary removals, and Texas Appleseed maintains our relationship with the coalition. We are very interested in monitoring how the rollout proceeds during the rest of the 2021-22 school year.

New Staff Members: Since our last newsletter, we welcomed six new staff members and a familiar face. We look forward to you meeting Jing Chen (Accounting Manager), Briana Gordley (Policy Analyst, Fair Financial Services Project), John Laycock (Research Associate), Martin A. Martinez (Youth Justice Policy Advocate), Jessi Stafford (Research Associate), and Chris Willuhn (New Projects Associate). We are also excited to welcome back Mary Mergler (Senior Counsel, Criminal Justice Project).

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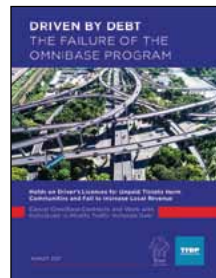
Angela C. Zambrano
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Our Deepest Thanks

Our board members are the heart of our organization, contributing their talent, energy, enthusiasm, and more to ensure the success of our nonprofit. These board members will continue to be a part of the Texas Appleseed family despite their board terms ending. We extend our gratitude to Doug Bland, George Butts, Sean Gorman, Chief Justice Tom Phillips (Ret.), and Mark Wawro for their service, support, and friendship.

New Reports & Toolkits



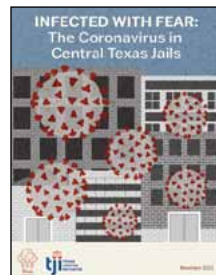
Driven by Debt: The Failure of the OmniBase Program

Our new report with the Texas Fair Defense Project reveals how the OmniBase program, operated by DPS and used by local courts across the state to prevent driver's license renewals, fails to achieve its purpose while negatively impacting more than 400,000 Texans. Data from over 800 municipal courts in Texas shows that courts that use OmniBase see no financial or enforcement benefits over courts that do not use the program. Find the report at www.texasappleseed.org/fines-fees.

In related news, on September 22nd, the Dallas City Council voted to end its OmniBase contract, yet this progress is currently under threat, as OmniBase is maneuvering to undo Dallas' decision.

Ticket Help Texas Launches in Spanish

This toolkit, now available in Spanish, provides information for Texans who are unable to pay fines and other costs as part of fine-only offenses, such as traffic tickets. It covers a range of topics for people who often do not have their own legal representation in Class C misdemeanor cases. Find it at www.tickethelptexas.org/espanol.



Infected with Fear: The Coronavirus in Central Texas Jails

Texas Appleseed developed this report with the Texas Justice Initiative. A major finding was that jail standards fell short of providing full protection to jail staff or incarcerated individuals. The report looked at how these jails responded to the pandemic and outlined areas of improvement that could reduce the transmission of future viruses and health crises in jails. Find the report on the homepage of our website.



Give a Gift of Stock

Do you own appreciated stocks? Stock gifts are a great way to make a meaningful gift to Texas Appleseed. They're also tax-advantageous for you! If you are interested in this giving option, please contact Jamie Tegeler-Sauer, Development Director, at jsauer@texasappleseed.org to learn more and receive Texas Appleseed's brokerage information.

Good Apple Dinner

On November 10th, we were excited to resume our Good Apple Dinner in person, and we also broadcast it live. We honored **Jennifer and Peter Altabef** with the *2021 J. Chrys Dougherty Good Apple Award*. Jennifer and Peter are dedicated philanthropists and exemplary leaders within both the private and nonprofit sectors. Their impact on the Dallas community and beyond is truly admirable.

Texas Appleseed also presented the *2021 Pro Bono Leadership Award* to an outstanding law firm, **Latham & Watkins LLP**, for partnering with us to spur positive change. They proved to be an indispensable partner during a tumultuous year.

We congratulate our honorees and thank our sponsors and attendees for their generous support.



American Rescue Plan Funds

The American Rescue Plan Act includes \$350 billion for local governments in order to “provide a substantial infusion of resources to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.” Funds are intended to directly help people in need in response to COVID-19.

The pandemic has exacerbated racial and economic disparities, and in our report, *How State & Local Governments Should Consider Spending Available American Rescue Plan Funds*, we recommend that Texas counties and cities put these funds towards closing those gaps.

There are 17 recommendations focusing on direct cash assistance, housing, assistance to children and families, community infrastructure, and education.

Find the report on the homepage of our website.



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