





## Sine Die: 88th Legislative Session (Regular)


It was a busy legislative session. We testified; collaborated with community members; met with lawmakers; tracked hundreds of bills; and always kept families, kids, and communities top of mind as we advocated for laws that would help Texans. Below is a summary of some of the bills that Texas Appleseed worked on this session:


 **Abolishes juvenile court fees.** SB 1612 is part of a civil fees clean-up effort and abolishes the remaining juvenile court fees levied against youth and their families. Now, justice-involved youth and their families can focus on rehabilitation instead of worrying about paying burdensome court fees.


 **Abolishes local juvenile curfew ordinances.** HB 1819 abolishes a local government's ability to enact a curfew ordinance that targets youth and can subject them to a criminal record and high court fees, all without counsel. Now, vulnerable youth, including those who may be homeless or fleeing abuse, cannot be punished for simply being in a public space at certain hours.


 **Diverts juvenile Class C misdemeanors.** HB 3186 requires local governments to adopt a diversion plan for youth charged with fine-only offenses in municipal and justice courts. Currently, municipal and justice courts can only order diversion strategies after a case has been convicted or deferred, whereas this bill allows diversion at the front end of a case, aligning municipal and justice courts' practice with that of the juvenile court system.


 **Establishes registration requirements for data brokers.** SB 2105 creates a new requirement for data brokers to register with the state and to implement an information security program with safeguards to protect personal data. Data brokers currently collect and sell individual data with almost no oversight or limitations. By requiring registration, the bill establishes transparency and is an important step towards giving Texans more control over their personal data. This bill helps vulnerable adults and survivors of domestic violence, as it offers a step towards protection from use of this data for financial abuse.

 **Establishes basic privacy protections for personal data collected by businesses.** HB 4 establishes the state's first comprehensive data privacy protections. It provides Texas residents the right to know, access, correct, and delete personal data held by covered businesses, as well as opt out of the collection and sale of personal data. Texas Appleseed successfully advocated for enhanced consumer protections in the bill, including stronger enforcement rights and the creation of a guide to assist Texans in understanding and utilizing their data privacy rights.



 **Establishes a pilot program to ensure youth aging out of foster care have bank accounts.** SB 1379 implements a pilot program to ensure youth aging out of foster care are provided a checking and savings account. Foster youth aging out of care are faced with providing for themselves at a young age. Not having a bank account makes this already challenging transition even more difficult. Many foster youth are currently unable to get bank accounts because they do not have a reliable parent or guardian who can serve as a co-signer.

 **Creates oversight of Pell-funded higher ed in prisons.** SB 526 requires that colleges/universities seeking to create Pell grant-funded educational or training programs in a Texas Department of Criminal Justice facility must receive prior approval to do so by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. This will create an additional layer of oversight and lead to higher quality programming being offered in Texas prisons.

 **Allows incarcerated individuals to apply for occupational licenses.** HB 3743 includes multiple provisions related to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, one of which allows incarcerated people to apply for occupational licenses prior to release. Previously, incarcerated people had to wait until after release to apply for a license, hindering employment in the field in which they were trained while in prison.

 **Relates to parental rights regarding a threat assessment.** HB 473 ensures parents are notified and are kept involved when their child is undergoing a threat assessment at a public school.

As of the writing of this newsletter:

 Signed into law  Passed both chambers and sent to the Governor

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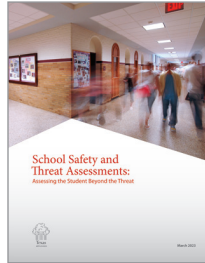
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## Texas Appleseed Receives Cy Pres Award

Law firm Rusty Hardin & Associates designated Texas Appleseed as the recipient of a \$240,500 cy pres award that stemmed from a class action lawsuit they filed to challenge predatory practices by a payday lender. Texas Appleseed is so thankful to firm partner Daniel Dutko and the firm for their leadership and for supporting our nonprofit. For the full announcement, see our press release under the Resources tab on our website.

## School Safety Report



A report by Texas Appleseed includes new data from the 2020-21 school year related to school districts' Safe and Supportive School Programs (SSSPs) and threat assessment teams required by Texas' Senate Bill 11 (2019). Texas Appleseed's public information requests uncovered inconsistent data collection practices, incomplete reporting, teams lacking training, and discrepancies between district-reported data and data provided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), suggesting poor implementation that impedes the program's efficacy.

"The SSSP program has the potential to enhance student safety, including addressing warning signs, but only if we ensure that it is implemented correctly," said Andrew Hairston, Director of our Education Justice Project. Find the report on the Education Justice page of our website.

## Debt Collection Report

Most people who are sued for a debt don't have an attorney and do not make it to court. To make it easier for Texans to participate in the legal process, Texas Appleseed developed a plain language letter packet, in English and in Spanish, designed to be distributed to consumer debt collection defendants by the court. The packet includes timely and easy-to-understand information about the lawsuit and legal rights. Our report, *Improving Access to Justice in Consumer Debt Lawsuits*, released in May, shows how receiving the packet was beneficial for study participants who experienced the legal process as defendants.



Texas Appleseed recommends that the letter packet be used as a template to help fulfill Texas Judicial Council resolutions that were adopted in 2020 that directed the Office of Court Administration to develop a post-service and pre-default judgment letter packet. It could be piloted in a court for further study before being fully rolled out. Find the report on the Debt Collection page of our website, under Fair Financial Services.

## Leave a Legacy to Benefit Future Generations

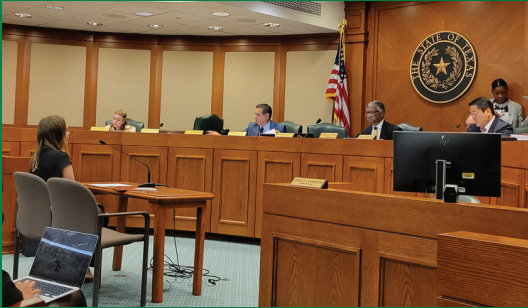
Remembering Texas Appleseed in your will or estate plans secures the continued success of our work. The legacy created by your commitment to social justice and racial equity will ensure that all Texans can realize their full potential for generations to come. If you have questions or are considering including Texas Appleseed in your will or estate plans, please contact Texas Appleseed's Development Department at [giving@texasappleseed.org](mailto:giving@texasappleseed.org).

## Texas Ends Shackling of Kids in Court

Due in part to Texas Appleseed's advocacy, the Supreme Court of Texas issued a rule ending the indiscriminate shackling of kids in juvenile hearings. As of June 1, 2023, youth will only be shackled in hearings if the court finds they are a risk to themselves or others, or if they are a flight risk.

# Texas Appleseed at the Capitol

Check out our staff in action in Austin!



Jessi Stafford testifies in front of the Juvenile Justice & Family Issues Committee at the Capitol.

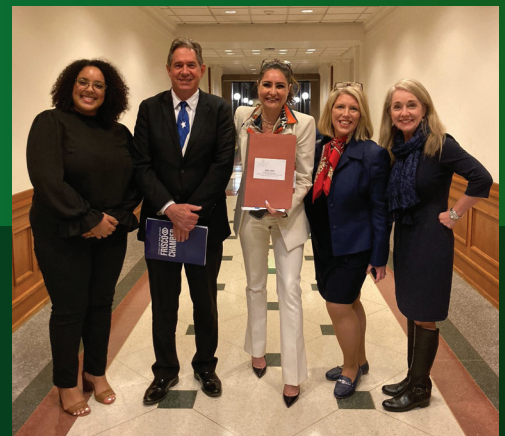


Cole Meyer testifies in front of the House Corrections Committee at the Capitol.

L to R: Akanksha Balekai (Texas Appleseed), Sarah Mae Jennings (Texas Fair Defense Project), Nick Hudson (ACLU Texas), and Rep. Salman Bhojani at the Capitol.



Jennifer Carreon testifies in front of the Senate Committee on State Affairs at the Capitol.



L to R: Briana Gordley (Texas Appleseed), Tony Felker (Frisco Chamber of Commerce), Rep. Mihaela Plesa, Maureen Johns-Griffin (Frisco Chamber of Commerce), and Rebecca Young Montgomery (Founder & CEO of Montgomery Strategies/Frisco Chamber of Commerce Consultant) at the Capitol to support financial literacy courses at high schools.

Andrew Hairston testifies before the Senate Committee on Education.



Texas Appleseed's legislative briefing on February 10 in the House Members Lounge at the Capitol. L to R: Briana Gordley, Martin Martinez, Andrew Hairston, Jennifer Carreon, and Gabriella McDonald.

## LONG-TERM CARE 101:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT  
NURSING FACILITIES IN TEXAS



February 2023

# Long-Term Care FAQ

Long-term care refers to a spectrum of services provided to help elderly people and people with disabilities meet their medical and personal care needs. Texas Appleseed's new online resource, *Long-Term Care 101*, answers frequently asked questions about long-term care facilities and highlights changes needed to ensure the health, independence, and well-being of more than 165,000 residents statewide. Featuring answers to more than 20 questions, here are some of the topics covered in the FAQ:

- What types of long-term care exist?
- How much does long-term care cost?
- What is a skilled nursing facility?
- Are long-term care facilities rated?
- What home-based or community-based services are available in Texas?
- What are the most common consumer complaints against long-term care facilities?
- Who owns long-term care facilities?

For a link to the FAQ, see our press release under the Resources tab on our website.

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