

Gearing Up for Texas' Legislative Session



January marks the start of Texas' 88th legislative session, and we've compiled our legislative priorities into one easy-to-use document. We've also launched a page on our website dedicated to session. There, you'll find blog posts, reports, action alerts, and other resources. So many Texans

still face hardship, and we will be at the Capitol to support communities, children, and families through our advocacy.

Visit our page at www.TexasAppleseed.org/88th-texas-legislature.

Mental Health Services in Schools

In partnership with other advocacy organizations working on education justice issues, we joined in a letter to the Texas Education Agency in support of the framework to bolster school-based mental health services. These services were outlined by the White House earlier in July. We urged TEA to provide local education agencies with significant resources to address the mental health crisis that presently exists for young Texans.

Read the letter at www.TexasAppleseed.org on our Education Justice project page.



Rainbow of Resources

We created a new Texas-focused resource guide for LGBTQ+ youth and allies. It provides information about counseling, how to find friends and allies, where to find shelters, understanding your rights, getting medical help, and more. An electronic version is available on our website. Educators and other supportive adults can request physical copies, at no cost, by emailing us at info@texasappleseed.org. In 2023, the guide will be available in Spanish.



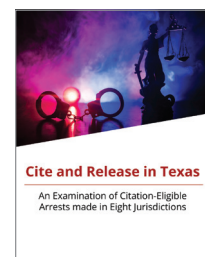
Cite and Release in Texas

Annually, thousands of Texans are arrested for minor offenses, jailed, and subjected to a criminal record. Under cite-and-release laws, certain misdemeanors are eligible for citation instead of arrest. Citation in lieu of an arrest does not change the offense or the potential outcome — it only dictates whether someone will spend time in jail pretrial. State law grants broad authority to law enforcement to cite and release.

The decision to arrest results in wasted resources, including police spending hours or more booking someone, overburdening local jails, and the time for magistrates to appear for arraignments. These unnecessary arrests also impact people's lives, such as their employment and housing.

Our latest report examines citation-eligible arrests made in eight jurisdictions — Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Garland, Houston, Lewisville, Lubbock, and Plano — and reveals a number of findings. In 2019 alone, over 15,000 individuals were unnecessarily arrested and booked into a local jail in these jurisdictions. These individuals could have instead been issued a citation and required to appear in court at a later date.

Find the report with our policy recommendations at www.TexasAppleseed.org on our Criminal Justice project page.



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In Memoriam

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Getting Cities to Eliminate a Problematic Debt-Based Program

Texas Appleseed and our partner Texas Fair Defense Project are working to end a harmful program in Texas. The cities of Dallas and Austin, as well as Harris County, voted to cancel their participation in the state's Failure to Appear/Pay Program, acknowledging the harms of the program to their most vulnerable residents. Yet San Antonio continues to use the program and is one of the heaviest municipal users in the state. The program allows municipal courts and justice of the peace courts to put a hold on a person's driver's license renewal when they miss a court date or if they are unable to pay fines and fees in mostly traffic-related cases and other low-level criminal cases.

The San Antonio Municipal Court has more than 71,000 outstanding holds on people's licenses. Below are some additional top-level findings from our latest report:

- It is a major barrier to low-income San Antonio residents getting and keeping a job.
- It most heavily burdens low-income San Antonio communities with high concentrations of residents of color.
- It traps San Antonio residents in a cycle of debt.
- It leads to deeper involvement with the criminal legal system due to poverty, not public safety.

Both nonprofits urge the San Antonio City Council to cancel the city's contract to participate in the state's Failure to Appear/Pay Program, as well as lift existing holds.

Read the full report at www.TexasAppleseed.org on our Criminal Justice project page.

Meet the Staff



In this issue, we're featuring **Gabriella McDonald**, an attorney and our Pro Bono & New Projects Director.

How do you work with law firms and other individuals who want to support Texas Appleseed's advocacy work?

Working with Texas Appleseed on a pro bono basis is unique. It offers the opportunity to work on highly important issues in distinctive and pioneering ways: amicus briefs, statute drafting, website design, creation of self-help and pro-se guides, and interviewing stakeholders on specific issues, for example. The options are endless, and we strongly value being able to partner with a range of people and professions.

The Emerging Leaders Council is a member-based arm of Texas Appleseed that young professionals in Texas can join. As the primary liaison, tell us more about what people can expect.

It's an opportunity to network with fellow professionals in all industries across the state of Texas. It offers the ability to gain leadership experience in a professional organization, and it's a great chance to do some pro bono work with people who want to make Texas a better and more equitable place.

How does Texas Appleseed identify new projects to research and tackle?

We tackle issues that exist as barriers to Texans' ability to thrive. We focus particularly on issues that are not being addressed by other organizations. Communities and the organizations that represent them are key to understanding what's happening throughout the state.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

My incredibly talented, innovative, and intelligent co-workers.

Give us a few artists on your playlist.

Jazmine Sullivan, Steve Lacy, and H.E.R.

TEXAS APPLESEED

Good Apple

DINNER

We returned to the Four Seasons' ballroom to celebrate legal heroes and advocates who have made a difference in Texas. We honored **A. Shonn Brown** and the late **Clarence B. Brown III** with the *J. Chrys Dougherty Good Apple Award* for their devotion to advancing equity and for their incredible impact on the Dallas community and beyond. We also honored **Deloitte** and **Enoch Kever PLLC** with *Pro Bono Leadership Awards* for helping us spur positive change.



But Next Time

Texas Appleseed was proud to collaborate with community leaders from Texas, Florida, New Jersey, Louisiana, and Puerto Rico, who have navigated multiple disasters for decades and are building tools and networks to strengthen our response to major storms and climate events. With Texas Appleseed serving as a lead writer for the report *But Next Time: Storm Survivors Demand Overhaul of Disaster Recovery System*, we revealed real challenges



experienced by storm survivors across the country, showing how the federal disaster recovery system is broken. At a joint event in New Jersey, we called for action from Congress and the federal government to build a functional recovery system that can handle the increased severity and frequency of storms to ensure all families and communities can recover and are better protected from the next disaster.

Find the report at www.TexasAppleseed.org on our Disaster Recovery & Fair Housing project page.

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