



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Appleseed is a Network of 18 public interest justice Centers in the United States and Mexico. The Network focuses on a variety of social, economic, and legal justice issues, bringing a non-partisan evidence-based approach to evaluating problems. Appleseed, working with stakeholders across the spectrum, uses its findings to propose and advocate practical, achievable solutions. This document summarizes Appleseed's primary work in this area.

OVERVIEW OF TOPIC AREA

Appleseed Centers work to make our government institutions better, stronger, fairer and more accessible to everyone so that the government is better able to protect our rights and provide equal opportunity for all. Appleseed's work includes, but is not limited to, advocating to end modern "debtor's prisons" by which those of lower incomes are thrown in prison or jail for inability to pay fees or fines, providing resources to formerly incarcerated individuals as they reenter society, and bail reform.



COLLABORATIVE NETWORK ACTIVITIES

The Appleseed Network Criminal Justice Working Group is focused on the issue of fines and fees. The Group is working together with the Legal Impact Network's Criminal Justice Working Group to gather documents and research, interview stakeholders and advocates from around the country, and ultimately put together an advocacy toolkit for groups interested in addressing fines and fees, especially at the local and municipal level.

SELECT CURRENT PROJECTS

DOCUMENTING ABUSES OF CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE

Alabama Appleseed released a report titled "Forfeiting Your Rights: How Alabama's Profit-Driven Civil Asset Forfeiture Scheme Undercuts Due Process and Property Rights." The report found, among other things, that in a quarter of the cases reviewed, criminal charges were not brought against the person whose property was seized, resulting in the forfeiture of more than \$670,000 by innocent people. It also found that in 64% of cases where criminal charges were filed, the defendant was Black even though African-Americans comprise only 27 percent of Alabama's population.

ENDING MONEY BOND

Chicago Appleseed convenes an advocacy group known as the Coalition to End Money Bond. The group, with strong support from Chicago Appleseed, persuaded Chief Judge Evans of the Circuit Court of Cook County to issue a general order that reduced the amount of money bond required by defendants. This work resulted in a reduction of the Cook County jail population by 1400 people.

ADDRESSING MASS INCARCERATION

Kansas Appleseed successfully led an effort to defeat a sales tax increase that would have cost taxpayers nearly \$165 million over 20 years to fund an expansion to the Douglas County jail.

CHALLENGING CONDITIONS IN PRISON

Nebraska Appleseed is working in partnership with ACLU Nebraska, ACLU Prison Rights Project, DLA Piper and Rosen Bien Galvin & Grundfeld LLP on a lawsuit against the Nebraska Department of Corrections over conditions inside Nebraska's severely overcrowded prisons. This case stands to address significant civil rights violations and lack of access to basic medical care.

REFORMING THE BAIL BOND SYSTEM

Almost two-thirds of the individuals held in Texas county jails have not been convicted of any crime, but are being detained before trial because they cannot afford the bond amount set in their cases or even 10 percent of the bond amount to pay a bail bondsman. Texas Appleseed is working to reform the current bail bond system so that decisions about pretrial release and supervision are based upon risk level and research, rather than the amount of money a defendant has.

ANALYZING DEBTOR'S PRISON REFORM

In Texas, tens of thousands of people are being sent to jail each year for failure to pay tickets, fines and court fees arising from criminal cases. Texas Appleseed is focused on analyzing the extent of these problems statewide, with an eye toward ensuring enforcement of the state and federal constitutional guarantee that no Texan who is unable to pay a debt—whether it arises from contact with the criminal justice system or a private loan—is arrested or jailed simply because they are unable to pay.

ADDRESSING RE-ENTRY OBSTACLES

Washington Appleseed recently released a re-entry guide for individuals who are in transition from prison. The guide is a comprehensive resource focused on providing important information about individuals' rights and obligations, how-to information so that individuals are empowered to act and templates of letters, sample forms and other valuable tools that can help make processes more transparent and outcomes more successful.

SELECT PRIOR WORK

2017

Connecticut Appleseed's Connecting Through Literacy Incarcerated Parents, Children and their Caretakers ("CLICC") project made dramatic further progress, winning a 5-year, \$660,000 grant to satisfy mentoring and literacy needs for incarcerated parents and their children throughout the state. CLICC aims to reduce recidivism and facilitate successful reentry outcomes by reconnecting incarcerated parents and their children by using a family literacy curriculum and providing supportive mentors. CLICC includes six months of in-prison mentoring and literacy work as well as six months of post-release mentoring, literacy work and family activities.

2017

Governor Abbott signed into law a pair of bills designed to help Texans resolve tickets without destroying their livelihoods, through alternatives such as payment plans, fee waivers, and community service. Texas Appleseed led the way in advocating for this important reform bill.

2017

Alabama Appleseed, Kansas Appleseed, South Carolina Appleseed and Texas Appleseed all joined an amicus brief in a case before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit challenging Virginia's practice of suspending the driver's licenses of those who cannot afford to pay court fees and fines.

2016

Kansas Appleseed advocated for criminal justice reforms, including advocacy that convinced the city of Lawrence to repeal their jail fees ordinance and forgive \$700,000 in accumulated unpaid fees.

2015

Georgia Appleseed began a process to seek the views of Georgia community members from all walks of life to help in assessing the nature of police-community relations in Georgia and to seek recommendations for changes to law, policies, and practices that could improve or enhance them. The long-term goal of this project is "to increase public confidence and trust in the fairness of police interactions with community members and of prosecutorial charging decisions without regard to race or ethnicity."