



SOWING THE SEEDS OF JUSTICE

Select advocacy work over recent years

Texas Appleseed is a nonpartisan nonprofit working toward policies that are fair, just, and equitable for all Texans.



Legislative Advocacy

Years of local advocacy efforts led to a new 2023 law. It eliminated juvenile curfew ordinances statewide, which targeted youth and subjected them to criminal records and high court fees, all without appointed counsel. Now, youth who may be homeless or fleeing an abusive home cannot be punished for simply being in public at certain hours.

We fight for survivors of domestic violence and other vulnerable Texans to overcome financial damage created by an abuser. Laws in 2019 and 2021 that we advocated for as part of the Texas Coalition on Coerced Debt expanded identity theft protections to include debts resulting from coercion and abuse. In 2023, we spearheaded a law to help prevent financial abuse by requiring data brokers to register with the state and safeguard personal data. At the Texas Legislature in 2025, as part of our work with the Texas Coalition on Coerced Debt, we were successful in passing HB 4238, which bolsters debt collection protections for victims of identity theft.



Texas Appleseed worked to bring HB 123 to fruition in 2019. It created a mechanism to ensure children who are homeless or in foster care can obtain their driver's license or state ID card for free. In 2021, Texas Appleseed helped advocate for the passage of a bill that provides free driver's education to the same young people.

In 2019, Texas Appleseed successfully advocated for evidence-based multidisciplinary teams to conduct school-based threat assessments, rather than have local prosecutors charge young Texans with terroristic threats. Moreover, in 2023, Texas Appleseed supported a bill that led to increased parental involvement in this process.



We successfully advocated to include a new text messaging system for court reminders in the Texas budget. Similar programs have decreased failures to appear for court dates by 20%-25% in other jurisdictions. Based on that experience, we believe this program will result in tens of thousands more Texans getting to required court dates and reducing the number of arrest warrants for failure to appear substantially throughout the state.

Texas Appleseed supported the passage of several housing-related bills – SB 840, SB 15, and HB 24 – in 2025 that will have the effect of increasing the supply of both affordable housing and market-rate housing. The bills allow apartments to be built in what are now commercial or office areas; they allow homes to be built with smaller lots in new subdivisions, reducing the amount of land needed for each house; and another bill made it more difficult for a small number of property owners to ban housing from their neighborhoods. In areas with a certain population size that also have a nearby university, SB 1567 prevents municipalities from restricting the number of roommates that can live together, which will help offset the high cost of rent. These laws will have a great impact on Texas, and set the conditions for future rent and housing price reductions.



Community Work

Texas Appleseed has been a key partner in 49 Texas city ordinances to rein in payday and auto title lending abuses. We also helped spur the Community Loan Center, which has provided over 160,000 affordable loans.



In 2020, as part of our advocacy, the City of Austin and Harris County each ended their OmniBase contracts. Dallas ended its contract in 2021. The Failure to Appear/Pay program allows courts to place holds on people's driver's licenses for unpaid fines and fees related to minor offenses, such as traffic tickets. Holds continue even if someone begins making payments or starts community service. Driving with an invalid license can result in negative outcomes – warrants, arrests, and more fines – yet many Texans continue to drive to meet basic needs, such as getting to work, school, or the doctor.

In 2024, we worked with disaster survivors and community-based partners to convince the City of Houston to increase its allocation of long-term federal disaster recovery funding for Hurricane Beryl from zero dollars for housing recovery to \$100 million for housing recovery. Since 2019, we have also worked with partners HOME and CEER to increase flood mitigation funding for underserved, high-risk areas in Harris County. This work included first-time equity requirements for a \$2.5 billion flood bond and, in 2023, raising the percentage of federal funding for underserved areas from less than 50% to almost 70%.



Since 2021, we have coordinated the McKinney-Vento Liaison Council (MVLIC) which convenes homeless liaisons from across the state for monthly meetings. The MVLIC has been instrumental in identifying the systemic issues that impact youth experiencing homelessness and helps guide our advocacy goals.

We established an Education Justice Youth Fellowship in March 2024 to support increased democratic participation by young people, particularly regarding their school environments. Our program accepts Texas youth ages 14 to 24 who have been directly impacted by school punishment or school policing. We educate them about civic matters, show them how to register to testify before the Legislature, and arrange meetings at the Capitol with legislators during an official Lobby Day. The first cohort of seven Texans graduated in 2025. In 2026, we are also launching an Education Justice Parent Advocacy Institute, which will run parallel to the Youth Fellowship. The Parent Advocacy Institute also aims to diversify the representation of voices at the Texas State Capitol within school discipline policy discussions.



Administrative

In 2024, following a three-year investigation, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) announced its findings that the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) violated the U.S. Constitution, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act due to mistreatment and abuse of youth in their five state secure facilities. The DOJ's report included a series of critical remedial measures to bring the facilities back into compliance. Texas Appleseed and Disability Rights Texas jointly filed the complaint to the DOJ against TJJD in 2020 spurring the investigation, which began in 2021. We will continue to advocate for a reduction in the number of state secure facilities, and that Texas should keep youth closer to their communities for treatment and rehabilitation.



Texas Courts



Due in part to Texas Appleseed's advocacy, the Supreme Court of Texas issued a rule in 2023 ending the indiscriminate shackling of young people in juvenile hearings. Before the rule, children were routinely shackled when appearing before a judge, even for low-level offenses or no prior system history. Shackling can be traumatizing and developmentally harmful. It also runs counter to the presumption of innocence inherent to our justice system.

In 2022, the Texas Supreme Court adopted rules to create a notice and hearing process for people to recoup protected money that was wrongfully seized by a debt collector. Texas Appleseed advocated in support of rules that enabled quick hearings and clear and transparent notices. The final rules provide a step forward for people to get back legally protected money seized from a bank account. Before this new process, there was no system for Texans to have their funds returned.

In 2023, Texas Appleseed developed and tested a plain language debt collection letter packet. Indicators show the letter packet could significantly improve defendants' understanding of their case and their likelihood of successfully engaging in the legal process. In June 2024, a Justice of the Peace court in Harris County began piloting a modified version of the letter, using a QR code to connect people to additional information rather than mailing the full packet. Evaluation is underway, but it shows promise that this simple step will increase "answering" the lawsuit and reduce default judgments in debt collection lawsuits.



To view additional advocacy milestones, please visit the Impact section of our website.

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