



SHINING A LIGHT ON DATA



**GEORGIA
APPLESEED**

Center for Law & Justice

**FY 2023
IMPACT
REPORT**

July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023


OUR IMPACT

BY THE NUMBERS

PRO BONO HOURS **1,658** 

OUR FAIR PROJECT | Page 4

 **122** Average days saved per student

 **23,302**
Days saved for students represented

1,131 Advocates trained

LEGISLATION | Page 5

Bill drafted and passed **1** 

 **3** Problematic bills thwarted

HOUSING | Page 5-6

 **1** 10-year policy-driven Housing Advocacy Plan

 **200+**
FAMILIES AT CONFERENCES

Housing advocacy outreach to **60,258** Georgians

SCHOOL-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH | Page 5-6

 **1** MODEL SBBH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

 **1** SBBH toolkit

SHINING A LIGHT ON DATA

A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

The mission of Georgia Appleseed is clear: through legal advocacy and policy change, we keep the state's most marginalized children in school, in stable, healthy housing, and out of the juvenile justice system. Our work impacts Georgia's families of today, but also generations to come, ultimately breaking intergenerational cycles of incarceration and poverty. And in protecting the state's most vulnerable children, we also advocate for systemic change that improves opportunity for all of Georgia's children.

How we choose our strategies to accomplish this mission, however, may not always be as clear to others. In this annual report, we share how we harness the power of data to steer our strategies and achieve the greatest impact.

Data-based decision-making was one of our founding values nearly twenty years ago and it remains fundamental today. During the 2023 legislative session, data led us to create and advocate for Georgia Senate Bill 169. Currently, expelled and suspended kids often miss weeks of instruction as they wait for their schools to schedule a tribunal to determine whether the child indeed violated a school rule. The data shows:

Learning loss. The 216 students served by Georgia Appleseed's School Justice initiative averaged 18 days out of school (sometimes as many as 55 days) before their school disciplinary hearings. Almost none of these children received instructional materials during that period.

Increased drop-out rates. A Georgia Department of Education study found that for students in grades 8-10, missing just 11-14 days of instruction in a school year decreased their odds of graduating by more than 25%.

Economic costs. School suspensions cost the U.S. more than \$35 billion in economic costs, over \$11 billion in fiscal costs, and \$24 billion in additional social costs. Lowering the suspension rate by just 1% could lead to more than \$2.2 billion in social benefit nationwide. (UCLA)

Equipped with this data and first-hand experience with our FAIR project kids, we drafted and pushed for a revision of the Public School Disciplinary Tribunal Act to require timely disciplinary hearings (and limit rescheduling) and provide course materials to students waiting for disciplinary proceedings. SB 169 passed the Senate unanimously, but stalled in the House. We look forward to re-introducing the bill in the 2024 General Assembly and seeing it through to become law. And then the real work begins of working with and supporting schools to meet the new requirements.

For us, data is not just a set of numbers; it's a living, breathing force for positive change. We hope this report shows how data supports our work and demonstrates the exceptional returns on your investment in us as we continue our journey towards a world of practical, equitable solutions.

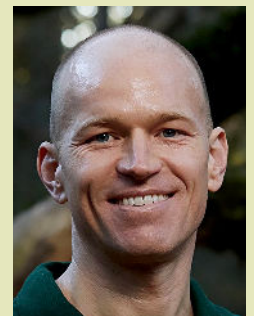
Thank you for all your support this past year.



Tori & Michael



TORI SILAS
Board Chair



MICHAEL WALLER
Executive Director

A YEAR OF DATA

DATA GROUNDS, INFORMS AND IMPROVES OUR WORK.

Over the last 18 years, Georgia Appleseed has championed practical, effective solutions by Evaluating, Soliciting, Responding, Sharing, and Leading with data.

In Fiscal Year 2023 we went even deeper.

Data isn't a static tool for us; it is a dynamic resource to build long-term strategy, inform day-to-day decision-making and ensure our programs stay relevant and impactful.

Evaluating Impact

INDEPENDENT DATA ANALYSIS. To ensure that we deliver effective results, we partner with independent third-party evaluators like Get the Data, LLC, which assesses the impact of our **FAIR project (Fairness, Advocacy & Individualized Representation)** for children in foster care. Get the Data's analysis put real numbers to the experiences of these students for whom we provided legal representation or advocacy: 23,302 total days (an average of about four months per student) saved from out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Given the statistic that even missing two weeks of instruction dramatically decreases the chance of graduation, preserving four months of classroom time is life-changing.

Soliciting Insights

PERFORMANCE SURVEYS. We are committed to listening to the kids and families we serve. We conduct interviews, focus groups, and surveys with partners like Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). We use insights from listening to refine our program offerings, enhance our training materials, and choose our policy priorities. We've built evaluation into our training so that we can continue to connect with and learn from those we've trained.



122

average days
saved per student



23,302

days saved for
students
represented



INTENTIONAL ENGAGEMENT. Our exhibit, “See Me: Pieces of Life from Youth in Foster Care” (above), showcases the artistic expression and lived experiences of youth navigating Georgia’s foster care system. Their voices center and motivate our work to enhance life opportunities for children in care.

COMMUNITY-CENTERED APPROACH. When we listen to constituents and partners, we ensure our work is aligned to address real needs and promote homegrown solutions. Last year we convened nine partner organizations to plan two **housing conferences**, providing self-advocacy tools including financial, legal and logistic resources for the 200+ attending families. Our outreach – including a Healthy Housing Advocacy Toolkit and policy recommendations – reached more than 60,000 throughout Georgia.

Responding to Needs

STAYING CURRENT. We are attuned to external data and trends, like the uptick in mental health crises among Georgia’s students – 73,000 middle and high school students reported seriously considering harming themselves in the past year. Nearly half (46%) of kids who need mental health services have trouble finding them.

Last year, through our partnership with DFCS and outreach to caseworkers, we doubled the number of children in foster care referred through FAIR for advocacy support at school.

Last year we developed a **school-based behavioral health toolkit** for schools, parents and attorneys, explaining the benefits of behavioral and mental health services in schools and how to start a program in a school. In collaboration with our long-time partners The Carter Center, Voices for Georgia’s Children, and Resilient Georgia, we consolidated our resources, making them more accessible. We also deepened our connection with McIntosh County, creating a **flagship model** for sustainable, evidence-based, user-friendly, school-based behavioral health services for middle school students.



200+
families at
conferences

Housing
advocacy
outreach to
60,258
Georgians



1 **SBBH**
toolkit



1 **FLAGSHIP**
model for
behavioral
health services

A YEAR OF DATA

CONTINUED



10-year
strategic housing
advocacy plan

Sharing Information

DISSEMINATION. We develop and share practical guides for elected officials, educators and administrators, caseworkers and other advocates, and families. For example, after years of development within our 80+ member convening, our Georgia Healthy Housing Coalition unveiled its **10-Year Strategic Housing Advocacy Plan**, the first of its kind in Georgia.

TRANSPARENCY. We make information readily available and easily accessible for a range of audiences. Our website provides a library of resources, including up-to-date school discipline data, aiding parents and communities in understanding their school districts.

Showing Leadership

EXPERT TESTIMONY. Georgia Appleseed staff testify before lawmakers, serve on panels, and speak at conferences. During the 2023 Georgia Legislature, we testified before a legislative commission and committees on behavioral health, housing reforms, and **Senate Bill 169**, which we drafted and which passed the Senate unanimously.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP. Our legal team **reviews bills, drafts guidance**, and **initiates difficult conversations**. Recently, we defeated several housing measures that would have dramatically increased evictions against Georgia's poorest families. We also helped the bipartisan Safe at Home Act pass successfully out of the Georgia House of Representatives. The bill will require that landlords provide safe and healthy housing for their tenants – a first for Georgia. We will continue to advocate for the bill next session in the Senate.



Senate
Bill 169

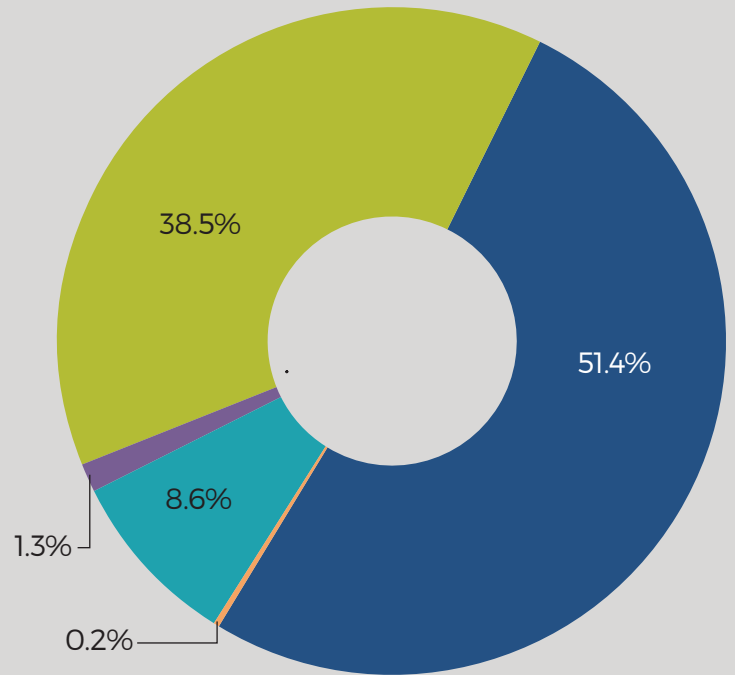


FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

FY23

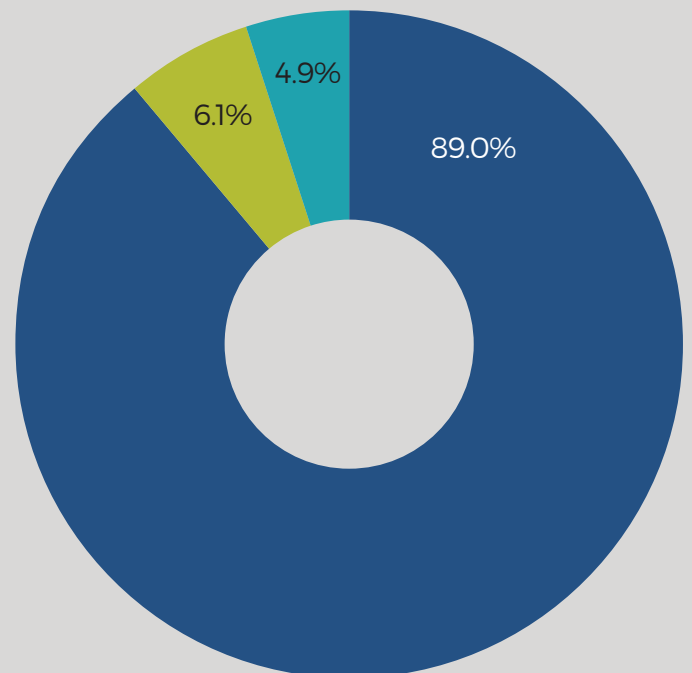
REVENUES AND SUPPORT

Contributions and Grants	\$1,234,029
Contributed Services	\$923,934
Fundraising and Special Events	\$203,574
Contributed Facilities	\$30,220
Other Income	\$4,409
Total Revenues & Support	\$2,396,166



EXPENSES

Programs	\$1,960,731
Management and General	\$133,493
Fundraising	\$107,197
Total Expenses	\$2,201,421



Total Increase in Net Assets \$194,745

SUPPORTERS

\$100,000+

Georgia Bar Foundation, Inc.
Georgia Dept. of Human Services,
DFCS
Georgia Power Foundation
United Way of Greater Atlanta
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\$50,000-\$99,999

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Rooms To Go Foundation
Smith Gambrell & Russell
Stewart Miller Simmons



WHAT WE DO

We advance systemic change to improve opportunities for children.

Our programs impact kids where they spend most of their time: at school and at home.

Georgia Appleseed's **School Justice initiative** collaborates with families, schools, and government agencies to improve systems and address inequities affecting children and their learning. We provide resources and guidance on juvenile justice, school discipline, climate, and school-based behavioral health practices to keep students in school, learning, and ultimately, out of the criminal justice system. In the past year, we equipped more than a thousand advocates to form a protective network around Georgia's most marginalized children. By assisting the most vulnerable students in Georgia we improve the educational environment for all.

Our **Housing Justice initiative** improves the living conditions for children and their families in unsafe homes and unstable housing. We advocate for legislative action to protect low-income tenants and build coalitions to make communities better through better housing. We convene and facilitate the Georgia Healthy Housing Coalition, bringing together members across the state to solve persistent issues keeping families from safe, stable homes. Our other main Housing Justice program – the Homelessness Intervention Project in Clayton County – protects thousands of families from eviction through an eviction diversion program, a new coordinated entry program for residents seeking housing supports, and Healthy Housing Conferences for low-income tenants.



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Georgia Appleseed Center for Law & Justice is a nonpartisan nonprofit law center that advocates for Georgia's most vulnerable and underrepresented children, keeping them in school with the supports they need, in healthy homes, and out of the justice system. To find out how you can support our mission, visit GaAppleseed.org.

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