

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
July 16, 2012

**CONTACT: Nancy J. Sterling, APR**  
ML Strategies / Mintz Levin  
(617) 348-1811  
[njsterling@mlstrategies.com](mailto:njsterling@mlstrategies.com)

**Joan Meschino**  
Massachusetts Appleseed Center  
for Law and Justice, Inc.  
(617) 482-8686  
[jmeschino@appleseednetwork.org](mailto:jmeschino@appleseednetwork.org)

### **Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth**

**Boston, MA-** A Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth was signed into law on July 8, 2012 when Governor Patrick signed the state's FY 2013 budget. The language creating the Special Commission is in Outside Section [208](#). The Special Commission will identify and study the many issues and barriers affecting unaccompanied homeless youth and will recommend positive policy changes and interventions. The Special Commission will report its findings and recommendations by March 31, 2013. Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice is named a member of the Special Commission.

"As a starting point, homeless youth will benefit greatly from this state level commission," said Massachusetts Appleseed Executive Director Joan Meschino, "which will provide leadership to make it a priority to address the hidden realities faced by unaccompanied homeless youth, to convene stakeholders and to develop strategies to implement change." Advocating for systemic solutions to social justice issues, Massachusetts Appleseed is devoted to ensuring access to stable education, housing and comprehensive services for this unique population.

Massachusetts Appleseed recently authored a [policy brief](#) in collaboration with National Appleseed entitled "Unaccompanied, Unidentified and Uncounted: Developing Strategies to Meet the Needs of America's Homeless Youth." The policy brief outlines findings and makes recommendations meant to spur advocacy, further research and ultimately meaningful improvement to the lives of these children. The Special Commission is tasked with examining many of the issues raised in the policy brief, such as barriers related to mandated reporting requirements and the inability to count this mobile and invisible population. The establishment of the Special Commission is a positive step in serving these vulnerable youth.

Massachusetts Appleseed commends the legislature for recognizing and taking action to remedy the unique unmet needs of this vulnerable population of homeless youth. Representative James O'Day (D West Boylston) was a chief proponent in the establishment of the Commission. He stated, "It is unconscionable that young people are left to fend for themselves, without shelter or caregivers. The goal of these efforts is to improve housing and residential stability, reduce the risk of harm and improve educational, physical, and mental

health outcomes for this population. I am incredibly encouraged that the House of Representatives, under the leadership of Speaker DeLeo and House Ways and Means Chair Brian Dempsey, the Senate, under the leadership of Senate President Therese Murray and Senate Ways and Means Chair Stephen Brewer, and Governor Deval Patrick have recognized this problem and have taken steps to remedy it.”

**About the Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice:**

Massachusetts Appleseed’s mission is to promote equal rights and opportunities for Massachusetts’ citizens by developing and advocating for systemic solutions to social justice issues.

At Massachusetts Appleseed, we dedicate ourselves to remedying social injustices for at-risk and underserved children, youth, and adults. Working with volunteer lawyers, community partners, and others, we identify and address gaps in services and opportunities in areas such as education, homelessness, and the court system. Through in-depth research, consensus building, and community problem solving, we develop powerful solutions for reforming the systems and structures responsible. Our work seeks to level the playing field and transform communities.

To learn more about Massachusetts Appleseed, please visit [www.massappleseed.org](http://www.massappleseed.org).

###