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GOVERNOR SIGNS SCHOOL DISCIPLINE BILL

Boston, MA- On August 6, 2012, Governor Patrick signed the school discipline and dropout prevention bill, H 4332 *An Act relative to student access to educational services and exclusion from school*. It is Chapter 222 of the Acts of 2012. This bill focuses on keeping children in school by curbing the use of school exclusions and promotes continued academic progress by requiring schools to offer an alternative education program.

MA Appleseed has been an integral part of this successful effort, which was led by our coalition partner, Massachusetts Advocates for Children. MA Appleseed's signature project, "[*Keep Kids In Class: Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline*](#)," positions us at the forefront of understanding the intersection of school discipline practices, zero tolerance, and youth entering the juvenile justice system. The coalition relied on MA Appleseed's school discipline data and expertise to support its advocacy.

"This is a key step towards our work to mitigate the effects of zero tolerance and to remove barriers to access to public education," said Massachusetts Appleseed Executive Director, Joan Meschino, "which will support at-risk youth to literally *keep kids in class* where they are safe, supported, and available for learning."

The law enacts several key recommendations from MA Appleseed's school discipline report, [*Keep Kids In Class: New Approaches to School Discipline*](#), which aim to decrease school exclusions and foster genuine educational opportunity for all children. In particular, the law requires school districts to collect and report data on school suspensions and expulsions, establishes additional notice and hearing provisions prior to suspension or expulsion, and promotes continued academic progress by creating an alternative education program.

MA Appleseed congratulates Massachusetts Advocates for Children for their strong leadership and applauds the legislature for their commitment to fairness, all of which will positively impact a child's education. Representative Alice Wolf (D-Cambridge) and Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz (D-Boston) were chief proponents on this bill. Chang-Diaz stated, "I was proud to champion this bill in the Senate, and I'd like to offer my sincerest congratulations to Representative Wolf on the bill's passage through the full Legislature." "Educational opportunity is one of the most

fundamental promises we make to our young people,” she continued, and “[s]tudents don’t just fade away when they’re expelled from school. They remain in our neighborhoods and in our society. Our responsibility to them doesn’t go away, and neither do the impacts they can have on our communities—for ill or for good. This bill recognizes that.”

About the Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice:

MA 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 MA 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.

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