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**Appleseed Justice Centers Release New Report: Protecting Girls of Color
from the School-to-Prison Pipeline**

*Report Finds Black Girls are Subject to Discriminatory School Disciplinary Action in Kansas,
Massachusetts, and Alabama*

WASHINGTON, DC, September 2, 2020 – Three members of the Appleseed Network, a non-profit network of independent organizations in the United States and Mexico working towards social and legal justice, today announced the release of their comprehensive report, [“Protecting Girls of Color from the School-to-Prison Pipeline.”](#) the final product of a year-long research project examining disparities in school disciplinary treatment for Black girls in Massachusetts, Alabama, and Kansas. [Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP](#), an international law firm, served as pro bono partner throughout the project.

The report is part of the Network’s extensive efforts to dismantle the complex school-to-prison pipeline, a continuum encompassing the steps that drive children out of school and into the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. Understanding how states approach school discipline is key: disciplinary policies including suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests may act as “gateways” to the criminal justice system later in their lives.

The report’s findings illuminate a stark truth: girls of color, particularly Black girls, are consistently disciplined at a rate much higher than their white peers. Often, discipline is incurred more or to a greater extent by Black girls than their white peers for similar behavior. The findings also emphasize the significant change needed in school district disciplinary policies and data collection methods in order to protect girls of color from being funneled into the school-to-prison pipeline by means of excessive school discipline.

“This research helps to shine a light on one of the many ways that systemic racism continues to play out in Alabama,” says Akiesha Anderson, Policy Director at Alabama Appleseed. “The data irrefutably shows that Alabama’s public schools discipline Black girls more harshly than their white counterparts. As state leaders continue to grapple with criminal justice reform, the school-to-prison pipeline and its impact on Black girls should not be left out of the conversation.”

Key findings in the report include:

- Across Alabama, Kansas, and Massachusetts, Black female students are roughly 5.2 times more likely to be disciplined than white female students.
- In Alabama, Black girls are roughly 3.7 times more likely to be disciplined than their white female classmates
- In Kansas, Black girls are roughly 6.2 times more likely more likely to be disciplined than their white female classmates.
- In Massachusetts, Black girls are roughly 3.9 times more likely to be disciplined than their white counterparts.
- State level data that is disaggregated by race, gender, and ethnicity is not widely available. The data also do not account for multiple forms of discipline and do not typically state the cause for discipline.

Policy proposals include:

- More state and federal legislation mandating the consistent collection of data on school disciplinary action and ensuring databases are publicly accessible, cross-tabulated, and disaggregated to account for age, gender, race, and ethnicity.
- More transparent data and incident reporting is a key step to further advocacy aimed at making schools safe environments for all students.

Deb Silva, Executive Director of Massachusetts Appleseed and a key partner on this project, said of the report, “It demonstrates the devastating impact that the intersection of gender and racial discrimination is having on Black girls in Massachusetts schools, and the indisputable need to include our classrooms in the ongoing dialogues about systemic racism currently sweeping the country. The school-to-prison pipeline is very much alive in Massachusetts, and this report is an important step forward in our work to advocate against the unjust school discipline policies that target and punish girls of color and promote a more inclusive and supportive vision of education.”

"The report exposes a dramatic imbalance in our school system and highlights the continued need for us to investigate and eradicate systemic racism at every level of our society. It is impossible to ignore the lifelong consequences that such a disparate school discipline system has on young people of color," says Mike Fonkert, Campaign Director at Kansas Appleseed. “We must do better.”

Willkie Farr & Gallagher worked with representatives from [Alabama Appleseed](#), [Massachusetts Appleseed](#), and [Kansas Appleseed](#) to collect and analyze federal school disciplinary data from the U.S. Department of Education’s Civil Rights Data Collection database, as well as state-level data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The report analyzes data available for five discipline categories: in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, referrals to law enforcement, and school-related arrests.

[About the Appleseed Network](#)

Appleseed is a network of 16 justice centers across the U.S. and Mexico working for a more just, inclusive, and hopeful future for us all