

# GOOD APPLE AWARD RECEPTION

*Honoring*



**YASMIN GHASSAB**

*Compliance Director*  
**Vertex Pharmaceuticals**



**Massachusetts  
Appleseed**  
Center for Law & Justice

*Celebrate the good with us!*

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The Good Apple Award is presented to a person in the legal or business community who exemplifies the true spirit of MA Appleseed’s mission. We admire and honor Yasmin Ghassab, Compliance Director, Vertex Pharmaceuticals Incorporated, for her commitment to public service and social justice. Ms. Ghassab represents the very best of our legal community and serves as an inspiration to us all. She is a “Good Apple” in the truest sense.

# GOOD APPLE AWARD RECEPTION

April 11, 2024

## SPECIAL MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

Boston City Singers; Jamaica Plain Training Chorus and Cantare

## OPENING REMARKS

**Melanie L. Todman**

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## AWARD PRESENTATION

### Honoree Introduction

**Billy Zile**

*Senior Manager of External MSAT*

Seres Therapeutics

### Honoree Acceptance Remarks

**Yasmin Ghassab**

*Compliance Director*

Vertex Pharmaceuticals





# YASMIN GHASSAB

—• *2024 Good Apple Award Recipient* •—

Yasmin Ghassab serves as Compliance Director at Vertex Pharmaceuticals Incorporated, a global biotechnology company that invests in scientific innovation to create transformative medicines. Yasmin began her legal career at the law firms Holland & Knight and DLA Piper in Boston and earned her B.A. from Ohio State University and her J.D. from Boston University School of Law. She continues her relationship with BUSL, serving as a lecturer for the Representing Life Sciences Company course.



Discovering her passion for inclusion, equity, and diversity initiatives as an undergraduate at Ohio State, Yasmin helped to found or lead a number of diversity and charitable initiatives, many of which still continue to impact thousands of students every year at the university. This commitment has continued throughout her legal education and career, with Yasmin serving in leadership roles focused on equity and pro bono service in every stage of her career. At Vertex, Yasmin has served as a Chair for the Culture, Diversity and Inclusion Committee for the Legal and Compliance Department and currently serves as an Executive Chair for Vertex's resource group for employees of color, VIBE. Outside of Vertex, Yasmin serves as a First Generation mentor through BUSL and a Legal Mentor through the Black Lawyers Matter initiative. Avid hikers, Yasmin and her husband Billy also serve as "Trail Blazers" for Camp Casco, a summer camp for children with cancer.

***"Yaz is a true advocate."***

**KELLY FINN**

*Host Committee Member*



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# INITIATIVES & IMPACT

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE

People rely on the courts and government agencies to solve serious legal problems, find help, and achieve stability. But inequitable practices can make navigating these complex systems impossible – especially for those who cannot afford legal representation. **The consequences can be devastating and life changing.** Denied access to rights and resources, families may be unjustly evicted, lose custody of their children, struggle to escape domestic violence, or become caught in a cycle of debt and poverty.

**“We saw clients return to their abusers or feel forced to stay with their abusers because it seemed safer than being homeless, without money, and isolated without resources due to language barriers.”**

*– Dawn Sauma, Co-Executive Director of Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence and member of the Mass Speaks Coalition*



### MA Appleseed is:

- Co-leading the Mass Speaks Coalition to expand language access at critical state agencies.
- Launching a new community-centered research project to break down language barriers in the Massachusetts Trial Court.
- Promoting best practices outlined in our research so unrepresented litigants can navigate the civil justice system.

## Highlights

- ✦ Mobilized the legal community to secure an unprecedented \$165.5 million investment in the Massachusetts' court system that will modernize court infrastructure and help working families achieve a fair outcome in court.
- ✦ Successfully advocated for the elimination of cell phone bans in all Massachusetts state courts, ensuring no one is turned away from court because they cannot afford an attorney to hold their cell phone for them.
- ✦ Filed a federal discrimination complaint against the child welfare system to demand accountability and stop the wrongful separation of immigrant families caused by language barriers.



# EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE

Students who are repeatedly excluded from school through suspensions, expulsions, or school-related arrests become more likely to drop out entirely and face increased risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system. **This is referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline:** the policies and practices that funnel students out of their classrooms towards incarceration and which disproportionately impact students of color and students with disabilities.



## MA Appleseed is:

- Co-leading coalition efforts to advance policies that disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, including banning the suspension or expulsion of students based on what they wear to school.
- Combating harmful media narratives to stop the criminalization of students and prevent the rollback of racial justice reforms.
- Supporting movement-building efforts at the local level that build student and community power, reimagine school safety beyond punitive discipline, and ground school environments in restorative justice practices.

Learn more about our interactive [school discipline data dashboard](#):



## Highlights

- ✦ Published community-led research exploring stories from girls of color about the impact of exclusionary discipline on their lives and amplifying the intersection of racial and gender-based discrimination in schools.
- ✦ Successfully advocated for the CROWN Act with coalition partners, establishing civil rights protections against natural hairstyle discrimination to prevent the over-policing of Black and brown girls.
- ✦ Supported coalition efforts to ensure every K-12 student in Massachusetts has access to free food at school, transforming the lives of an estimated 400,000 children around the Commonwealth.

# YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness face legal barriers that prevent them from meeting their basic needs, deepen trauma, and trap them in cycles of harm. Our **Legal Education, Advocacy, and Protections (LEAP) Project for Youth Experiencing Homelessness** aims to build a more robust legal safety net for Massachusetts' most vulnerable young people that assists them on their journey towards stability.



**“There are so many legal issues that youth might need to navigate: help with leases, mental health resources, employment issues, education access, and their everyday rights. This is even harder if you're experiencing homelessness.”**

*– Elisabeth Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of Bridge Over Troubled Waters, a Boston agency serving 2,000 youth experiencing homelessness annually*

## MA Appleased is:

- Coordinating know-your-rights trainings for youth experiencing homelessness and the adults who work with them.
- Elevating available resources and connecting with especially vulnerable populations such as LGBTQ+ and transition-age youth.
- Leading the Massachusetts Homeless Youth Legal Network, a group of 40+ attorneys and advocates working to support unaccompanied youth through pro bono resources and policy advocacy.

## Highlights

- ✦ Published the Massachusetts Homeless Youth Handbook, a comprehensive, state-specific know-your-rights guide for youth and young adults that answers common legal questions.
- ✦ Advanced legislation to expand the legal rights of underage youth experiencing homelessness so they can access supportive services without parental consent and meet their immediate survival needs.



Learn more about the community and pro bono partnerships that have made this work possible!

# PAST GOOD APPLE HONOREES

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- 2017** **JONATHAN CHIEL**  
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- 2018** **SENATOR WILLIAM "MO" COWAN**  
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**Vertex invests in scientific innovation to create transformative medicines for people with serious diseases.**

We work with leading researchers, doctors, public health experts and other collaborators who share our vision for transforming the lives of people with serious diseases, their families and society.

**Vertex is a proud supporter of the 2024 Appleseed Awards.**

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Eastern Bank is committed to recognizing the good  
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Congratulations to Yasmin Ghassab



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# Goodwin is proud to sponsor Massachusetts Appleseed's 2024 Good Apple Award Reception

We support its mission to promote equal rights  
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Ropes & Gray congratulates Yasmin Ghassab for being honored with the 2024 Good Apple Award. We value the opportunity to work with industry leaders such as Yasmin and Vertex Pharmaceuticals.

Ropes & Gray is proud to support the mission of Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice.

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**Yasmin Ghassab**

Compliance Director  
Vertex Pharmaceuticals

## Driving Progress

We are proud to support the **Massachusetts Appleseed Center** and its commitment to promoting equity and justice across the Commonwealth.

We join you in saluting 2024 Good Apple Award recipient **Yasmin Ghassab**, Compliance Director of Vertex Pharmaceuticals, for her dedication to charitable service and inspiring work to advance diversity.



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Ensuring equal access to justice is at the core of who we are as a firm. We are proud to support the 2024 Good Apple Award Reception and join **Massachusetts Appleseed** in its ongoing work on behalf of communities in need.

**Arnold & Porter**

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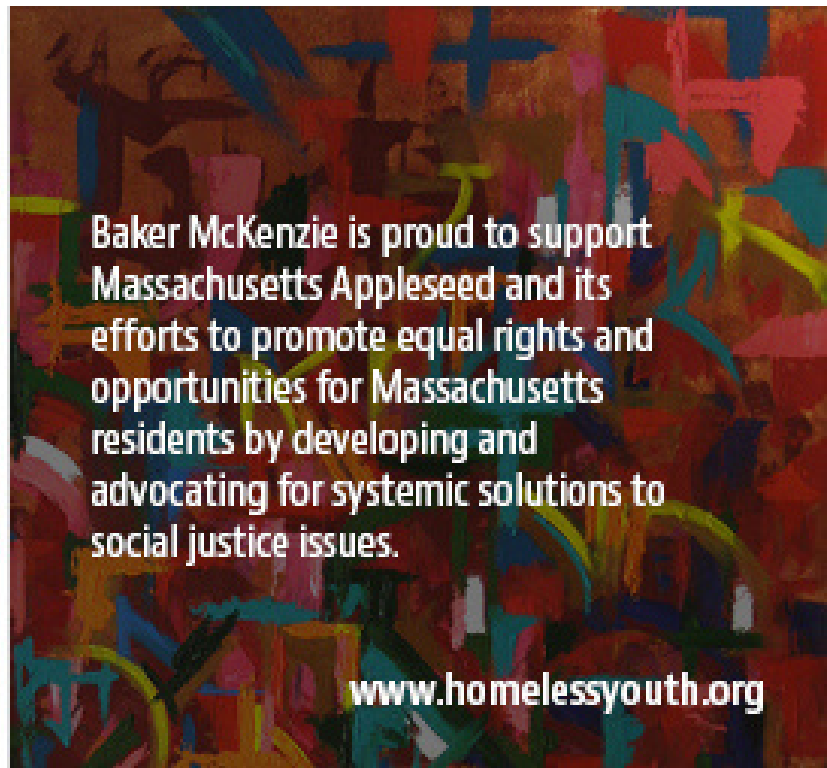


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**Congratulations to  
the 2024 Good Apple  
Award Recipient.**

Baker McKenzie is proud to support Massachusetts Appleseed and its efforts to promote equal rights and opportunities for Massachusetts residents by developing and advocating for systemic solutions to social justice issues.

[www.homelessyouth.org](http://www.homelessyouth.org)





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WilmerHale is proud to support Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law & Justice and extends its heartfelt congratulations to Yasmin Ghassab, the recipient of the 2024 Good Apple Award.

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# THANK YOU

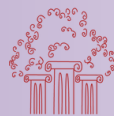
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