Proskauer

# For Good Spotlight: Massachusetts Appleseed

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Proskauer performs pro bono work for a number of innovative and impactful nonprofit organizations, including Massachusetts Appleseed. This week, we spoke with board member and partner in Proskauer's Corporate Department and member of Proskauer's Health Care Group, Devin Cohen, about the organization and its impact.

**Tell us about Massachusetts Appleseed. What is the organization's mission, and why is it important?**

Massachusetts Appleseed is a nonprofit advocacy organization focused on advancing equitable policy solutions across the Commonwealth. The organization's mission is to identify the root causes of injustice and work collaboratively to develop practical, evidence-based reforms that make a real difference in people's lives. Appleseed focuses on issues like language access, access to health care, education equity, and economic opportunity – areas where policy choices have a direct and lasting impact on our communities.

Massachusetts Appleseed is also part of the Appleseed Network, a network of nonprofit law centers throughout the U.S. and Mexico. The Appleseed Network was founded by Harvard Law School graduates, which gives the organization deep roots in Massachusetts. Participation in the Appleseed Network allows stakeholders to share ideas, research and effective strategies with partners across the country while staying grounded in the specific needs of Massachusetts. Our work matters because we combine strong local knowledge with a broader national perspective, and we bring together community voices, data and policy expertise to tackle complex challenges in hopes of achieving meaningful, lasting reforms for the Commonwealth.

**What made you decide to join the board?**

I decided to join the board of Massachusetts Appleseed because I had already seen firsthand the impact of the organization's work and the way it approaches systemic challenges. Before joining the board, I did pro bono work for Appleseed, including helping to revise the *Massachusetts Homeless Youth Handbook*, and leading "know your medical rights" presentations for local residents seeking assistance (more on that below!). That experience gave me a real appreciation for how thoughtfully Appleseed translates complex legal and policy issues into practical tools that directly support underserved individuals.

Joining the board felt like a natural next step and a way to deepen my involvement, contribute my perspective and experience, and support an organization that is doing meaningful, on-the-ground work to expand opportunity and strengthen communities across Massachusetts.

**What makes the organization different from others in the space?**

What sets Massachusetts Appleseed apart is the way it goes beyond traditional advocacy to develop practical solutions that are grounded in real experience and research. In addition to developing tools like the *Massachusetts Homeless Youth Handbook*, it also produces original research and data that shape how people understand and address barriers to justice and opportunity across the Commonwealth. Through strategic educational campaigns, policy publications and partnerships with local service providers, Appleseed helps ensure that resources and information reach the people who need them most.

Another distinguishing feature is Massachusetts Appleseed's deep collaboration with the local legal community, including strong, long-standing relationships with law firms like Proskauer that support its initiatives through pro bono legal services. This network of pro bono partners expands capacity and brings additional expertise to deliver impact that truly reaches people across the state.

**What kind of work have you done with Massachusetts Appleseed? What are the impacts of that work?**

Before joining the board, I partnered with the organization on several pro bono projects, including helping to update the *Massachusetts Homeless Youth Handbook*. Youth and young adults experiencing homelessness often lack a trusted resource to turn to for help. Access to clear, reliable information is critical, because trying to navigate services on your own can be overwhelming. The handbook is designed to serve as a single, dependable reference where young people can quickly find answers about available resources, cutting down on the confusion, legwork and delays that can stand in the way of getting help.

I also led “know your medical rights” presentations for local nonprofit organizations, with a focus on sharing practical legal information and resources directly with individuals who might benefit from these materials. The impact of this work has been very tangible, ensuring young people and the organizations supporting them have up-to-date, accessible information about where to go for assistance. I continue to work closely with Massachusetts Appleseed through Proskauer’s ongoing pro bono partnership with the organization. Our team is currently supporting several active projects, including in-depth research and ongoing updates to the *Massachusetts Homeless Youth Handbook.* We couldn’t be more excited to contribute to this impactful work and continue to support Appleseed’s broader mission.

**Related Professionals**

- **Devin Cohen**
  Partner