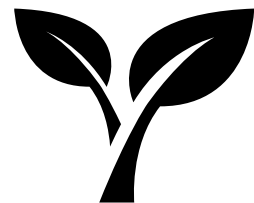




DC APPLESEED

Budget Season Recap & Summer Highlights

What's *Sprouting* at DC Appleseed?



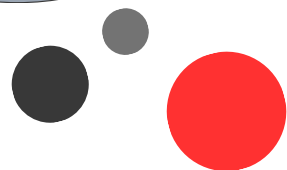
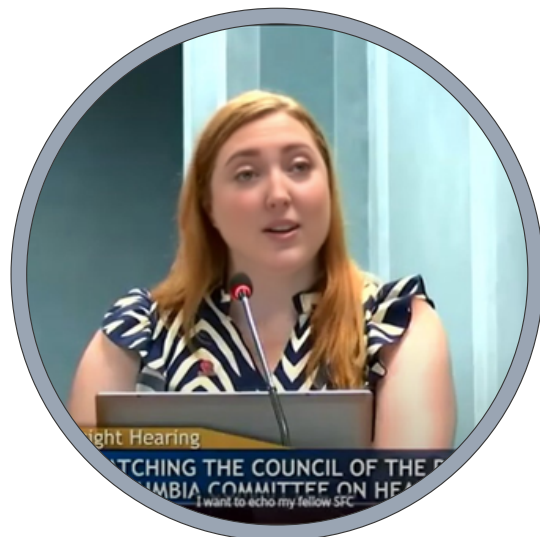
DC Appleseed's FY 2026 District Budget Advocacy

DC Appleseed staff stepped up to advocate for key priorities in the District during this summer's condensed Fiscal Year 2026 budget review. In total, our small-but-mighty team delivered testimony during four hearings related to DC Appleseed's priorities. Throughout the budget cycle, DC Appleseed staff and volunteers also met with fellow advocates to strengthen our collective efforts and ensure community voices were reflected in the Council's decisions. DC Appleseed and our coalition partners secured several major victories during the FY2026 budget process, reinforcing our shared commitment to health equity, environmental justice, and strong democratic institutions.

I. Long-Term Care: As Chair of the DC Coalition on Long Term Care's Workforce Committee, Kristin D. Ewing provided testimony for the Department of Health's budget hearing to elevate the voices of healthcare workers and aging residents in the District. Her testimony called on the Council to create a strategic coordinator position to facilitate interagency collaboration in addressing the long-term care crisis. She also called for investing in District training programs and an accelerated testing and credentialing process for certified nurse aides and home health aides to help expand the available workforce. Read further testimony on our website.

- **Key Win: New Long-Term Care Strategic Coordinator Position Established**

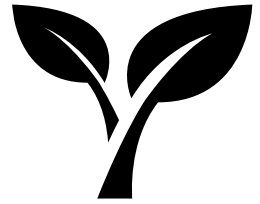
- In response to calls from the Long-Term Care Coalition, the District will repurpose the vacant Age-Friendly DC Coordinator role into a Long-Term Care Strategic Coordinator position. This new role under the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services will be tasked with coordinating efforts across agencies to address the workforce shortage affecting DC's aging population as well as overseeing Age-Friendly efforts and projects.





DC APPLESEED

Budget Season Recap & Summer Highlights



What's **Sprouting** at DC Appleseed?

II. Youth Behavioral Health: Kristin D. Ewing also testified at the Department of Behavioral Health's budget hearing as co-chair of the Strengthening Families Through Behavioral Health Coalition (SFC). Her testimony focused on the need to adequately fund the District's School Based Behavioral Health (SBBH) Expansion Program, improved access and care navigation, and crisis response services. Specifically, for SBBH, the testimony supported increased grant funding for school-based mental health services provided by community-based organizations (CBOs), recommending a minimum grant level of \$129,000 per clinician to help retain clinicians currently providing services in DC schools. In FY 2025, the program provided an average grant of just \$80,820 per clinician to the community-based organizations providing mental health services. Funding at the existing level does not cover all the costs for community-based organizations and results in low wages for clinicians, making the program unsustainable and retention and recruitment difficult, resulting in a dropping number of clinicians and CBOs providing services in schools.

- **Key Win: School-Based Behavioral Health Grant Funding Increased**

- The Committee on Health adopted a requirement for the Department of Behavioral Health to award grants of no less than \$120,000 per school, a critical policy win advocated by the Strengthening Families Coalition. Additionally, the Committee will require DBH to submit a comprehensive school-based behavioral health improvement plan to the Council and the Mayor by October 15th to ensure they are actively engaging in improving the program and properly implementing the new \$120,000 grant for CBOs.

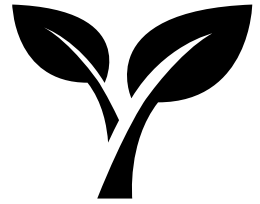
- **Additional Key Win: Funding for B25-0759, the Child Behavioral Health Services Dashboard Act**

- DC Appleseed and SFC have consistently advocated for funding for the Child Behavioral Health Services Dashboard. Funding the Dashboard Act allows DC Health to hire an additional data analyst to maintain and update the existing e-referral platform for DC residents and community providers (called LinkU). Expanding LinkU will enhance the ability of DC residents to identify and navigate the services and resources, including SBBH and other behavioral health supports, that the District offers.



DC APPLESEED

Budget Season Recap & Summer Highlights



What's **Sprouting** at DC Appleseed?

III. Environmental Justice: MJ Gray testified before the Committee on Transportation and the Environment regarding the Mayor's proposed sweeping cuts to the Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE). In close collaboration with the DC Environmental Network (DCEN), our environmental team met with staff from DOEE to assess the impacts of the proposed 24% agency budget cut. After the Committee on Transportation and the Environment released its amended budget, we reconvened with DCEN members for a meeting with Chairman Mendelson to advocate for additional environmental investments, particularly the funding needed to meet the District's stormwater MS4 permit requirements. In our testimony, DC Appleseed urged the Council to reverse the sweep of the Anacostia River Cleanup Funds and to reject a proposal to convert the fund into a lapsing fund, which would allow for annual sweeps. Commonly known as the "Bag Fund," this revenue is generated from the District's bag fees and supports essential functions such as trash trap maintenance, volunteer water quality testing, and environmental education programs. DC Appleseed also called on the Council to restore resources to DOEE's water quality monitoring budget that received an 82.5% cut. At a time when the District is investing significant capital funds to remediate legacy toxins in the river's sediment, eliminating ongoing testing programs would severely undermine those efforts.

- **Key Win: Bag Fund Restored and Protected from Future Sweeps**
 - The Council reversed the Mayor's proposed sweep of the Anacostia River Cleanup Fund (Bag Fund) and rejected the proposal to convert it into a lapsing fund. The Bag Fund's \$2 million will once again support river resources, including free Anacostia River boat tours, trash traps, and stormwater facility maintenance. Additionally, the approved budget restored \$18 million funding to support the District's stormwater permitting obligations and the Sustainable Energy Trust Fund.

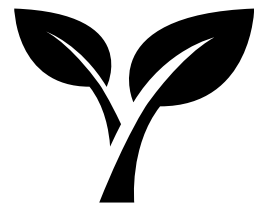




DC APPLESEED

Budget Season Recap & Summer Highlights

What's **Sprouting** at DC Appleseed?



IV. Ensuring Strong Democratic Institutions and Good Governance:

Vanessa Batters-Thompson testified before the Committee of the Whole regarding two unnecessary subtitles added to the Budget Support Act. One provision would have weakened campaign finance and ethics rules, a concerning move in the wake of recent ethics investigations and Council expulsions. Batters-Thompson also raised concerns about change to DC's zoning appeals laws that could require appellants to pay a substantial bond and be liable for the non-moving party's legal fees. In her testimony, Batters-Thompson stressed that neither provision would impact the FY2026 budget, per the Chief Financial Officer's fiscal analysis. Given the lack of nexus to the budget, we urged that neither provision should not be advanced through the Budget Support Act and should instead be subject to public hearings and analysis by the Council Office on Racial Equity.

- **Key Win: Harmful Budget Support Act Provisions Removed**
 - Both of the provisions opposed by DC Appleseed were removed prior to final passage of the budget. Our advocacy helped ensure that the budget process was not used to advance unnecessary, unrelated, and potentially damaging policy changes.

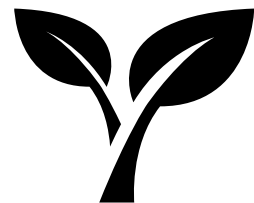




DC APPLESEED

Budget Season Recap & Summer Highlights

What's *Sprouting* at DC Appleseed?



Summer Highlights

- Director of Development & Communications, Erin Calloway, attended the Mubadala Citi DC Open with friends, sat for the South Carolina Bar exam, and hosted her grandparents' 60th wedding anniversary vow renewal weekend for 400 guests.
- Policy Counsel & Director of Experiential Learning, Kristin D. Ewing, enjoyed a long weekend in a Catskills mini cabin—relaxing, reading, puzzling, and soaking in the scenic views.
- Policy Volunteer, *MJ Gray*, surpassed her LSAT goal in August and celebrated with a beer and wine tour through Belgium and France—finally developing a taste for red wine!
- Senior Fellow, Tommy Wells, explored the Boundary Waters between Minnesota and Canada by canoe and fished along the way, then went whitewater rafting on North Carolina's French Broad River. He shared, "We have a beautiful country, and it's a great privilege to enjoy it!"
- Executive Director, Vanessa Batters-Thompson, and her family traveled from West Virginia and the Smoky Mountains to Munich and Interlaken, making unforgettable memories along the way.

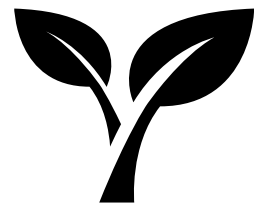




DC APPLESEED

Budget Season Recap & Summer Highlights

What's *Sprouting* at DC Appleseed?



Organizational Updates

- **Introducing Four New Board Members:** We're thrilled to announce the addition of Austin Ownbey (Akerman LLP), Dr. Caroline Popper (Popper and Company), Nabil Kaiser (SEI), and William Buffaloe (O'Melveny & Myers LLP) to our Board of Directors. Their diverse expertise enhances our governance, financial oversight, fundraising, and programmatic support. At this pivotal moment in our growth, their insights and leadership will help drive our mission forward with renewed strategic focus.



Austin Ownbey

Partner, Akerman LLP

Caroline Popper, MD, MPH, JD

President, Popper & Company



Nabil Kaiser, MSHP

Principal, SEI

William Buffaloe

Counsel, O'Melveny & Myers LLP



- **Welcoming Our Fall Intern Cohort:** This fall, we're excited to welcome a talented group of interns to our team. Joining us are Legal Policy Interns David Boord (GW Law), Paige Buckley (American University Washington College of Law), and Sydney Richardson-Gorski (Georgetown Law), along with Natalie Ogami (Arizona State University) as our Policy and Communications Intern.



David Boord

George Washington University Law



Natalie Ogami

Arizona State University



Paige Buckley

AU-Washington College of Law



Sydney Richardson-Gorski

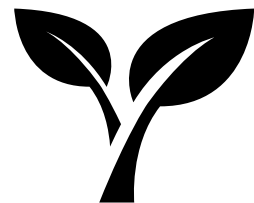
Georgetown University Law Center



DC APPLESEED

Budget Season Recap & Summer Highlights

What's *Sprouting* at DC Appleseed?



Media & Events

- **DC Appleseed issued two press releases:** (August 11, 2025) DC Appleseed Responds to Federal Takeover of MPD and (August 27, 2025) DC Appleseed Responds to Trump Administration Executive Orders.
 - DC Appleseed's work and expertise was highlighted by WAMU 88.5, NPR, CBC, and ABC 7 News.
- **Summer Interns Attend Washington Council of Lawyers Forum:** In July, our summer interns participated in the Washington Council of Lawyers' Summer Forum, gaining valuable exposure to public interest law and hearing from leaders across the legal and advocacy communities. The event provided an excellent opportunity for interns to explore career paths in public service and deepen their understanding of access to justice issues.
- **Emerging Leaders Network – Pro Bono In Action Launch:** In July, Steptoe proudly hosted the inaugural Pro Bono In Action event, bringing together members of the Emerging Leaders Network for an evening of meaningful engagement. Attendees heard directly from project teams, engaged with a plaintiff from a landmark case, and gained insight into the advocacy shaping DC's future. The evening concluded with a lively social hour, offering a chance to connect with fellow policy professionals, advocates, and changemakers—all united by a shared commitment to building a more just and vibrant District.

