

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Seven Civil Rights, Social Justice Groups Urge State Agency to End Use of Tasers and Pepper Spray in Texas Schools

*Request Comes in Wake of School Police Tasing Incident Contributing to Student's Fall and Hospitalization with Traumatic Brain Injury*

**Austin, TX** – In the wake of an incident in which a Bastrop deputy tased a Texas high school student on school grounds, leaving him currently hospitalized and in a coma, a coalition of civil rights and social justice organizations are asking the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement to end use of so-called “less-than-lethal weapons” in school districts statewide.

These groups are asking the nine-member Commission to create and implement new standards barring the use of Tasers, stun guns, and pepper spray on Texas students. View their letter to the Commission [here](#).

“Tragic incidents like this one demonstrate why the state should not grant police free rein to wield weapons in schools for the apparent purpose of maintaining order,” said **Terri Burke, Executive Director of the ACLU of Texas**. “Schools should be safe havens from this type of police use of force. I hope the commission will heed our call to end use of Tasers and pepper spray.”

On November 20, a member of the Bastrop County Sheriff’s department tased Noe Nino de Rivera, a 17-year-old student at Cedar Creek High School, causing de Rivera to fall and hit his head, after which he was airlifted to an Austin hospital where he remains in a medically-induced coma. According to eyewitness accounts, de Rivera was not involved in the fight that the deputy was attempting to stop when he tased the boy; in fact, de Rivera was trying to stop the fight.

“In this post-Sandy Hook era, everyone is cognizant of the need to keep schools and students safe, however there are far more effective ways to maintain order in schools that do not pose such a high risk to students,” said **Texas Appleseed Deputy Director Deborah Fowler**. “We need a statewide policy on use of force in schools that makes it clear that Tasers, stun guns, and pepper spray are inappropriate to use on children. And, if we are going to increase the number of school safety officers, it is imperative that officers are adequately trained.”

In September, the U.S. Department of Justice [announced](#) that it would provide \$45 million in funding for additional school safety officers across the country. Texas received approximately \$2 million of that funding.

The request to the state Commission outlines the potential physical harm posed by Tasers, which pack a shock of up to 50,000 volts and are designed for use on adults engaged in criminal or potentially violent activity, not children. The letter also highlights the physical dangers of pepper spray—also used in some Texas schools—and points out that its use on children is widely condemned by medical experts.

Co-signees on the letter include the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Texas, Disability Rights Texas, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Texans Care for Children, Texas Appleseed,** and the **Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC).**

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