

August 31, 2013

Mr. Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Building II - Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I spent ten weeks with the DC Employment Justice Center as a legal services intern. The DC EJC provides *pro se* legal advice to low-wage workers through weekly legal clinics and advocates for the concerns of workers in the District of Columbia. As a legal services intern, my primary responsibilities were to research novel client concerns and communicate legal advice to a wide range of clients.

My experience at the DC Employment Justice Center was invaluable. The work I did with the DC EJC gave me the opportunity to practice the skills and reinforce the legal training I acquired during the first year of law school. The direct interaction with clients truly put into perspective how much community lawyering is needed. Over the course of ten weeks, the DC EJC served over 250 clients through its weekly Workers' Rights Clinics and I personally served over 40 clients.

The Equal Justice America Fellowship allowed me to fully focus on the great work I did this summer. As a legal services intern, I was able to develop my legal research skills on a variety of topics. I researched novel issues related to employment law in the District of Columbia as well as complex ethical considerations. Additionally, my experience with the DC EJC enabled me to sharpen my legal writing skills. Each week, I was tasked with drafting letters for clients so that they might pursue the legal remedies available to them. Finally, my internship provided a window into the everyday operations of government administrative offices, city council meetings, and administrative hearing courtrooms.

I am extremely thankful for the opportunity I was given this summer and I cannot thank Equal Justice America sufficiently. I can confidently say that not only was my professional development positively impacted by my receipt of this fellowship, but so were many residents of the DC metropolitan area.

I would like to provide a concrete example of an individual I was able to assist during the course of my internship. Ms. Smith came to speak with me at one of our weekly Workers' Rights Clinics. Ms. Smith had been dismissed from her place of employment nearly a year earlier due

to repeated absences. She was in the unfortunate position that her mother was dying of cancer and she was the only person available to care for her ailing mother.

Ms. Smith had taken the appropriate steps to request a leave of absence, but was unable to submit a necessary “alternative schedule plan” to her employer due to the overwhelming commitment of caring for her mother. She was dismissed and remained unemployed. When she came to speak with me, she was visibly distressed. Her mother had passed a only a month before and her savings were running so low that she feared she would soon be unable to pay rent.

After getting a few more details and speaking to an advising attorney, it was determined that Ms. Smith was eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. She had not applied due to a misunderstanding of her rights to apply and was very grateful to be told she had a right to file for benefits. Ms. Smith left EJC’s clinic not only with the necessary forms filled out to apply, but with some piece of mind that she had earned the right to a safety net that would give her some room to breathe while she continued to cope with her loss and search for a new job.

Ms. Smith was only one of the hundreds of people the DC Employment Justice Center was able to assist during the course of my summer internship. I am very thankful for the opportunity to serve the people of the District of Columbia which was made possible by my receipt of an Equal Justice America Fellowship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Ortiz", written in a cursive style.

Andrew Ortiz