

**August 31, 2017**

**Dan Ruben,**

Executive Director

Equal Justice America

13540 East Boundary Road,

Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I fear that any words of appreciation will not do justice to the laudable work of the great team behind the Equal Justice America Fellowship. If during law school we all dream to be our best in the legal practice, to always fight the good fight and to never deny legal services to those in dire need, the reality, unfortunately, sometimes falls far away from our expectations. When demand for legal services in the low-income communities is high, but the funding is scarce or threaten to be cut off, practicing public interest law right after law school becomes an illusion or a struggle. I am so appreciative to Equal Justice America for fighting against the odds and making it possible for so many law students to pursue their choice of practice and work in public interest law right after law school!

With a keen interest in international human rights law, I find public interest law to be one of the most relevant areas of practice due to its strong focus on defending fundamental human rights of those who are most in need, those that cannot afford to stand up for their rights, or those that are too afraid to speak up. Working with Atlanta Legal Aid Society, Inc. (hereinafter ALAS) this summer and having the opportunity to make significant changes for the Atlanta community was a worthy and rewarding investment of my energy and time. As part of the Pro Bono Unit, I worked on cases involving guardianship petitions, name changes for the transgender community, estate planning for senior citizens and adoption petitions where the children were victims of crimes, neglect or abuse. I worked on more than 40 cases, interviewed with more than 15 clients, filed petitions in Superior and Probate Courts, and attended trainings and oral arguments in the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court.

While working on estate planning for senior citizens it was fascinating to listen to their life stories. A success story which I will never forget was the one of a woman born in Trinidad and Tobago who later immigrated to the U.S. to flee the abuse and violence of her family. Her

story was a great example of strength and willingness to fight against the odds so she can provide for her children a life she never had. Even if she was 60 years of age and with a newly-discovered breast cancer she wanted to have her estate planned so she can give everything she had to her children, nephews and nieces, her church and the school. It was a pleasure working with this client to make sure her estate was protected from creditors and distributed according to her wishes.

As part of the newly-implemented name change project, I've done extensive research into the legal steps and procedures required to have one's name changed, prepared petitions for the court and training materials for the volunteer attorneys. On paper it seemed like a smooth process. Unless there was an intention to fraudulently deprive another of any right under the law, a name change petition looked like it should've been easily approved. However, the reality was different, especially when the client was transgender. When I filed a petition for a name change, I quickly learned that some of the senior judges would deny such motions for transgender petitioners. It is hard to imagine how difficult, frustrating, and potentially impossible this could be for a transgender person with limited resources to fight against such traditional mentalities. Helping implement this project at ALAS was a great learning experience. It felt like a stepping stone towards increasing the chances for the transgender community to successfully pursue a name change while avoiding to go through a tedious and stigmatizing process *pro se*.

Spending time with ALAS during this summer, reinforced my interest in practicing public interest law and energized me to look for other opportunities to continue this work. It's a rewarding investment which makes it a pleasure to give your best every day. I could not thank enough to the team behind Equal Justice America for making my summer internship with ALAS one of the greatest experiences of my life.

Sincerely,

**Iulia Caizer**

LL.M. 2017 for Foreign Trained Lawyers  
College of Law, Georgia State University

# ATLANTA LEGAL AID SOCIETY, INC.

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August 30, 2017

Mr. Dan Ruben  
Equal Justice America

VIA EMAIL

Re: Iulia Caizer

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to confirm the Atlanta Legal Aid Society's work with Iulia Caizer. Iulia has been a pleasure to work with this summer and we have greatly appreciated her professionalism, competency, and concern for our clients. Ms. Caizer worked in the pro bono unit on cases involving adult guardianship petitions, name changes, adoption petitions, real property, estate planning, third party custody petitions, and government benefits.

Ms. Caizer has a great rapport with our clients; she is kind and compassionate. She is willing to listen to the legal issues raised by the client and respond appropriately. At one client meeting, the client commented on how well she interacted during representation. Many attorneys may not understand our client population. That was never an issue with Ms. Caizer.

In addition, Ms. Caizer has an excellent work ethic. She is always on time, prepared, willing to take constructive criticism, takes initiative, is a quick learner, and stays on task. She spent countless hours working on drafts of pleadings and documents, screening clients, and updating her work in our electronic files. She did not have to be asked to stay on task or follow our internal case handling policies, she did so professionally and efficiently

We are highly satisfied with Ms. Caizer's work and her role with our office. We would love to have her as an addition to the unit at any time in the future, she is a pleasure to work with.

If you have any questions, please call me at (404) 614-3946.

Sincerely,

Laura L. Rashidi-Yazd  
Attorney at Law