

September 18, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to thank Equal Justice America for giving me the opportunity to work at the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing (LCBH) by providing me a law student fellowship for the summer of 2014.

Working at LCBH, I represented clients in Chicago's eviction courts, helped tenants who had been illegally locked out of their homes, and assisted tenants who were suffering from serious health and safety conditions in their homes. When I began my internship, my goal was to advocate for social justice by providing tenants better access to legal services. I was able to work towards that goal at LCBH by providing legal services directly to tenants and by providing my supervising attorney an extra set of hands to manage the flow of cases. With help from Equal Justice America, I was not only able to help dozens of clients with their landlord-tenant disputes, but I also gained valuable courtroom experience that will help me become a better lawyer.

In one case, I assisted a tenant and her husband as they were dealing with the pressures of unemployment and feeling stuck in a home that did not feel like home. Since moving in last year, my clients had suffered major plumbing problems, bug infestations, and other conditions in their apartment. My clients had also lost their jobs and started to fall behind on rent payments. The landlord refused to do any repairs or address the bedbugs and cockroaches that had come from other tenants in the building. After falling behind on rent, the landlord sued to evict my clients. We took the case because a tenant should not be expected to pay full rent for an apartment that is falling apart, infested, and not being repaired. I attempted to negotiate with the landlord, but he would not budge and we took the case to trial. Half-way through the trial, the judge scheduled us to continue the

following week. However, the writing was on the wall: this landlord would not win his eviction judgment. He returned the following week with an attorney and I successfully negotiated a move-out date to give my clients time to move, a waiver of more than \$5000 in backrent, and a dismissal of the eviction action. My clients were finally able to remove themselves from the terrible living situation and start anew.

Another client I helped had been illegally locked out of her apartment by a landlord who refused to follow the landlord-tenant rules. My client and her infant son arrived home one night to find the locks on the doors changed. She called the police, had a police report completed, took pictures, and had text messages from the landlord telling her that he would lock her out. However, those things could not get her back into the apartment. The landlord could not be reached by phone. I wrote a letter to the landlord and followed up with phone calls to him and his parents to make sure they knew they had violated the law. The landlord then put the original locks back and returned my client to her apartment, but then threatened to do it again and throw all of her belongings out. When the weekend came following my phone calls and letters, the landlord did not try again to illegally throw out my client. My client had already had to spend five days out of her apartment, missing work and covering expenses, especially for her son, and we were able to prevent her from being out on the street again.

These experiences were a great way to immerse myself in legal issues that occur outside of court and in court. I was able to help clients as well as improve my skills in trial preparation, writing and filing motions, and negotiations. With an even stronger commitment to social justice and deeper legal experiences, I will be able to better work towards my goal of improving access to justice.

Sincerely,

Aaron McKean
University of Wisconsin Law School
Juris Doctor Candidate, 2015

Mr. Dan Ruben:

Aaron McKean served as my full-time intern in LCBH's Eviction Defense Project from June 2 to August 15, 2014. From the outset, Aaron did his best to familiarize himself with every relevant Illinois civil procedure rule, FED section, case, and treatise that I provided him with. Consequently, I trusted Aaron to work independently within a short time of his arrival at LCBH. Aaron drafted motions for summary judgment, pleadings, and settlements. I was pleased with the quality of Aaron's work product. His writing was well-organized and researched, with accurately cited and discussed authority. In fact, I intend to use two of his summary motions in the future.

A significant portion of Aaron's internship took place in the courtroom. He appeared in court nearly every day and served as primary counsel for several cases under my supervision. In one case of note, Aaron prepared a case for trial, represented our client at trial, and ultimately convinced the plaintiff to settle on favorable terms before the court rendered its judgment. Aaron was a respectful, firm advocate, and opposing counsel seemed to appreciate his courteous and professional demeanor. LCBH clients also valued Aaron's professionalism, with a few clients going out of their way to inform me of his efforts.

Aaron diligently adhered to LCBH procedure with respect to documenting case developments on legal server, managing deadlines, and communicating with opposing counsel and the clients. He handled his responsibilities with minimal oversight, which made him a real asset to my program. As to his office demeanor, Aaron was friendly and cooperative with all

LCBH staff. Frankly, he's probably better acquainted with our supportive services staff than I am. In conclusion, Aaron proved an asset to LCBH during his internship.

Best,

Noah Magaram
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