

September 2, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I spent my summer working in the HIV & LGBT Unit of South Brooklyn Legal Services (SBLS). SBLS is one of the Brooklyn borough offices of Legal Services NYC, the largest provider of free civil legal services in New York City. The HIV & LGBT Unit provides comprehensive legal services to low-income Brooklyn residents who are HIV positive or who identify as LGBT. I worked on a variety of legal issues for these clients, including eviction prevention, access to public benefits, and civil rights violations. To support my work in public interest this summer, I received a \$1000 Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship.

Working in a comprehensive rights unit allowed me to have a great diversity of experiences in the kinds of cases I worked on over the course of the summer. I learned an enormous amount from my experiences with both formal advocacy and informal advocacy for clients with cases in various forums, including housing court and administrative hearings. I drafted motions, appeals, and cross-examination questions for these formal proceedings. Informally, I called and emailed city agencies to obtain proper documentation and case management for clients. I also had the opportunity to lead an initial client meeting, attend trainings for community health partners, and write legal research memorandums.

Several of my clients in the HIV unit were elderly persons facing eviction. These clients also struggled with physical disabilities and limited social support systems. Several feared ending up on the street or in a single room occupancy (SRO) if the eviction took place.

One of my elderly clients, who was mostly homebound because of complications from his AIDS, was facing potential termination from the apartment he had called home for over a decade. He had shared the apartment with his elderly mother while caring for her during her late-life cancer treatments. After her death, he was facing eviction because his mother had failed to list him on the annual income recertification for this state subsidized housing. This client was facing potential eviction not because of a failure to pay rent, but rather because of the intricate and stringent requirements of living in publicly subsidized housing. In order to help this client to appeal his denial of succession rights, I first researched the relevant regulations and case law that would govern the appeal to the state Department of Homes and Community Renewal (DHCR). I visited the client's home to help him gather documentation that he had been living in the apartment for the requisite time period. I requested letters of support from his physician in order to prove his disability. Then I drafted his appeal to DHCR, complete with supplementary exhibits.

Shortly after my internship ended, I learned that our advocacy efforts were successful; the client's building manager granted him permission to stay in his apartment. Ensuring a successful

outcome for this client meant an enormous amount to me. I am proud that we prevented a situation where he might have faced homelessness while coping with his serious physical ailments and the trauma and grief of his mother's death. Moreover, the amount of anxiety and depression he had felt over losing his apartment was detrimental to his mental health and well-being. By zealously advocating for this client and keeping him informed throughout each step of the case, we were able to put forward the best defense possible, and, to some degree, assuage the client's anxiety.

I am incredibly grateful for the support that Equal Justice America provided me and other law students working in civil legal services for low-income clients this summer. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding my Summer Fellowship experience at South Brooklyn Legal Services.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Warrell
New York University School of Law