

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

August 22, 2011

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I want to take this opportunity to thank you and Equal Justice America for the summer grant which helped me to pursue a summer of public service. I spent an incredibly rewarding 10 weeks working with Community Legal Services of Philadelphia in their Aging & Disabilities unit. Under the mentorship of their attorneys, I assisted low-income Philadelphians in receiving their full public benefits.

One client who particularly stands out in my mind came to CLS shortly after her husband had died. Her husband had previously been a client of CLS, and the organization had helped get him on Medicaid late in his life. Unfortunately, he died a few months after. His widow came to us because she received thousands of dollars worth of bills from health-care entities saying she owed them for their various services. Because her husband was covered by both Medicare and Medicaid, she should not have been responsible for the copays and deductibles they said she owed. Several of the providers simply hadn't yet billed Medicaid, and these cleared her debt after I informed them of her husband's enrollment. Other contacts involved more in depth research into charity care policies or explanations that balance billing, billing the patient for any portion of the fee not covered by Medicare & Medicaid, is illegal. During the summer, I was able to clear away thousands of dollars worth of medical debt for this client.

I came to law school because I wanted to be able to help people during difficult times in their lives. The client above had enough emotional hardship in her life without having to worry

about bill collectors and collection actions. While working with CLS, I provided direct legal services to more than 40 low-income clients. I wrote several letter briefs to the Social Security Administration arguing for waiver of overpayments. In these situations, our clients were receiving at most \$674 a month in Supplemental Security Income benefit payments, and because of some complexity in the law which they had misunderstood, allegedly owed the Social Security Administration for excess payments they had previously received. To get this money back, SSA would withhold \$67 a month, 10% of the benefit amount. For our clients, this is a huge amount, as expenses for rent, medicines, utilities, car payments, or a mortgage, are often budgeted down to the dollar. Being able to have the overpayment waived, or negotiating a lower repayment amount each month, played a large role in ensuring the economic security of our clients.

Thank you for helping me to provide representation for those who would otherwise have had none. Legal Service organizations across the country are struggling with budgetary cuts and understaffing, and the attorneys expressed their thanks for law student interns who can help them catch up and provide vastly-needed legal services over the summer months.

Thanks again.

Very truly yours,

Alexandra Solomon
J.D. Candidate, 2012
University of Virginia School of Law