August 4, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to express my gratitude for the generous Equal Justice America fellowship that allowed me to work at Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) this summer. I had a great experience working in the Housing Unit of GBLS, where I assisted clients who were being evicted from their homes, and faced imminent homelessness.

While at GBLS, I conducted client interviews, updated clients on the status of their cases, and observed their hearings in Housing Court. I also negotiated with opposing counsel on behalf of clients so that they could stay in their apartments, and I drafted Motions to Dismiss for lease defects in order to protect tenants in eviction cases. I also assisted attorneys with the weekly housing clinic for *pro se* tenants.

My experiences working in the Housing Unit, especially observing cases in Housing Court and assisting with the housing clinic, showed me how difficult it is for low-income tenants to navigate the complicated legal process of an eviction without an attorney. For example, many tenants facing eviction for nonpayment of rent do not know that if the landlord does not handle the tenant's security deposit in a particular way, the tenant could be entitled to damages greater than the amount of rent the tenant owes. I helped dozens of low-income tenants fill out their *pro se* Answer and Discovery documents in housing clinic so that even if they did not have a lawyer representing them in Housing Court, they had a greater understanding of how the eviction process works, and a better chance of prevailing in court.

I also assisted my supervising attorney with individual cases throughout the summer. In one case, the landlord of one of our clients threatened to remove her washer and dryer after she reported bad conditions in the apartment. I assisted the client with filling out a Temporary Restraining Order to stop the landlord from removing the washer and dryer until the landlord signed an agreement stating that he would not remove them. This experience helped me understand the power of the legal process in protecting low-income tenants.

My experience working at GBLS this summer has been incredibly rewarding. Learning how the eviction process works has helped me understand how low-income tenants are disadvantaged in eviction proceedings, and how important it is for attorneys to help low-income tenants not only by representing them, but also by informing them of their rights. Without the Equal Justice America fellowship, I would not have been able to do this great work at GBLS and help dozens of clients stay in their homes. My work this summer at GBLS has reinforced my commitment to *pro bono* work, which I will continue in the future.

Again, thank you for your support of this wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely,

Carmen Riethman Boston University School of Law Class of 2018



August 5, 2016

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

RE: Carmen Riethman - Equal Justice America Fellow

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This letter is an evaluation, as requested, of Carmen Riethmans's fellowship in the Housing Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services this summer. I had the pleasure and luck of being Ms. Riethman's direct supervisor

Ms. Riethman was energetic, hard working and thorough in all her work. She interviewed,, clients, wrote letters, drafted affidavits, contacted government agencies and opposing counsel and helped negotiate settlements. She assisted in our weekly pro se housing clinics for tenants facing evictions and helped clients complete court forms. She also helped other attorneys in the office with emergencies on their cases, in particular when an attorney was overwhelmed preparing for a complicated jury trial.

She was inquisitive and thought about all aspects of a client's case – not merely the presenting problem. She asked me questions about aspects of the law that were unclear or what other laws might be relevant to a situation. She often checked facts or landlord background on her own where she thought might be relevant.

The clients with whom she worked trusted her and directed their calls directly to her. She was friendly and open but always respectful and professional. She had the patience to deal with many of our clients who have disabilities or are difficult to work with

She was a pleasure to work with and I'm sure a fine attorney in the years to come.



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Please contact me at 61.7 - 603 -1649 or <u>bzimbel@gbls.org</u> if you have any questions and thank you and Equal Justice America for making this fellowship possible..

Very Truly Yours,

Barbara Zimbel Senior Attorney Housing Unit