

August 29, 2015

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 appreciation to Equal Justice America for my summer fellowship and to describe some of the important work I participated in at Community Action Program Legal Services (CAPLAW).

CAPLAW is part of a national partnership that supports community action agencies (CAAs) across the country. CAAs are organizations, both public and private, which provide services to low-income families and administer programs to help individuals climb out of poverty. These organizations receive funding from the federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), and as a result must comply with numerous federal regulations. Most CAAs are private non-profit organizations, and are also subject to IRS 501(c)(3) rules and regulations. CAPLAW provides legal assistance and training to help CAAs comply with these regulations, affording them more time and resources toward their anti-poverty mission.

During my time with CAPLAW, I conducted legal research and drafted advisory responses to client inquiries. In one instance, I assisted an organization whose funding had been unilaterally frozen by the state. This funding freeze jeopardized numerous services and programs the CAA provided to low-income members of their community. I performed extensive legal research to identify any legal protections the CAA might have against the freezing or termination of funds. I found both state and federal safeguards against sudden funding changes, which provided the CAA an opportunity to challenge the funding freeze. This was one of the more rewarding experiences during my summer with CAPLAW. Helping an organization to continue to provide low-income services made me more aware of the importance of CAPLAW's mission and instilled a sense of pride in my work that I never experienced in prior positions.

As part of my summer fellowship, I also drafted a number of articles for CAPLAW's newsletter on changing areas of the law that could significantly impact CAAs. Among these pieces, I researched and wrote an article on the new proposed Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations that would increase the wage threshold for various existing FLSA overtime exemptions. The article explained the potential change and notified CAAs that they could comment on the proposed regulation. Because CAAs are often small organizations operating on a tight budget, it is vital that they remain apprised of any legal changes affecting employee compensation. During my time with CAPLAW, we frequently received employment law questions, and I saw firsthand how federal employment law can broadly affect these small organizations. As such, it was particularly rewarding to explain one proposed change to the law and inform our clients of their opportunity to comment on the regulation before it went into effect.

I am so appreciative to Equal Justice America for affording me the opportunity to work with CAPLAW this summer. I applied to law school in the hopes of beginning a career in public interest, and this summer was the first step on that path. My fellowship experience confirmed

that I made the correct career decision and demonstrated how rewarding a legal career in public service can be.

Sincerely,

Diana Stroud
J.D. Candidate, Class of 2017
Boston University School of Law