

Taylor Poe

Equal Justice America
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Dear Mr. Ruben:

So often we hear that defending the rights of children is one of the toughest challenges of our time and this is very true. This summer I had the privilege of interning with Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, LCCR, in New Orleans, LA. Serving with this organization has afforded me the opportunity to see the full extent of our outdated juvenile justice policies here in America. Too many children facing socio-economic challenges are drowning in the legal system with no alternative. This realization shaped my experience this summer with the juvenile justice system. Organizations like LCCR are so powerful and crucial in this fight to reform policy and provide high quality defense options for all children.

One of the most significant cases I was able to work on this summer was drafting a Due Process Complaint against the Orleans Parish Prison that addressed how children in prison are not given equal access to quality education. The Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) is legally obligated to ensure that every eligible young person in New Orleans' detention and jail facilities receives a free and appropriate public education. But OPSB is failing to identify detained and jailed young people with special education needs and to provide each of them with an individualized learning program that supports them in learning and transitioning successfully into adulthood and career opportunity. Working with my client to investigate, record and transcribe his educational experiences while in custody of OPP I was provided with an inside glimpse of just how educational discrimination works within the juvenile justice system and how we can begin to address those issues. This encouraged me to explore policy advocacy and impact litigation more.

Interning with Louisiana Center for Children's Rights this summer gave me an opportunity to not only address the legal needs of indigent clients that are children but it also exposed me to the policy work that needs to be done on behalf of these children. Thanks to the Equal Justice America Legal Services Fellowship I was able to serve those in need this summer.

Sincerely,

Taylor Poe
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