

August 31, 2016

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

Re: Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing you concerning my summer fellowship with LAF (formerly known as Legal Assistance Foundation) in Chicago, Illinois, funded in part by Equal Justice America. I worked with LAF in their Immigrant and Workers' Rights Practice Group this summer and was mostly involved in the department's sub-practice group of Employment. I am very thankful for EJA's support of my work with LAF, and the additional funds and support allowed me to gain valuable experience that continued to strengthen my desire to work in public interest law after graduating from law school.

This summer I was able to work personally and assist other attorneys on cases for over thirty clients with employment or other workers' rights related claims. Many of my day to day duties included: research and writing, interviewing clients for intake appointments, helping prepare for administrative hearings concerning unemployment benefits, drafting letters to judges concerning hearings, drafting briefs to the Board of Review for unemployment cases, drafting discovery and interrogatories for federal cases, presenting potential cases to groups of attorneys to assess if we should accept the case, as well as other substantive legal work. I learned many skills that I strongly believe will be invaluable in my continued practice of law.

One client I was able to help this summer was a man who was wrongfully terminated from his job and denied unemployment benefits. His case involved hundreds of pages of potential evidence, but as I searched through the evidence and put the client's case in order, we discovered that his previous employer had lied about many events to the judge and had described our client in a dishonest way. Although unemployment hearings are usually conducted over the phone, we petitioned for an in-person hearing with the Administrative Law Judge, and received notice that the request was granted. Being granted an in-person hearing for these cases is extremely rare but helps our client immensely as the judge has to look at our client's face instead of facts on paper regarding the case. After a detailed two hour hearing, we found out a few days later that the judge overturned the original decision denying unemployment benefits and ruled in our client's favor.

This case was one of the most satisfying wins to be a part of this summer because the attorney I worked with on the case said that my preparation was a large part of us being so organized at the hearing. It was also wonderful to witness the difference that the benefits made in the life of our client. He was struggling financially and had been taking care of his sister who had many health issues at the time, so it was amazing to witness the effect that the judge's decision had in his life.

Another opportunity I am very thankful for this summer that provided me with more diversified experience was volunteering with a legal clinic in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago that LAF helps to sponsor once a month. Volunteer attorneys from local law firms volunteer at the clinic and clients can either schedule appointments ahead of time or walk-in to discuss potential legal claims with an attorney. The clinic that I attended last month was the largest turnout, thirty-four potential clients, that LAF has witnessed at the clinic to date, and I was able to meet with six of those individuals to discuss their cases and then speak with a lawyer as to possible next steps or remedies available.

Working with LAF was a wonderful experience this summer, and the EJA fellowship allowed me to afford being able to work with clients that are often overlooked in our society. I was honored to be able to take part in the stories of clients who often have experienced great injustice and were very resilient and courageous men and women. Once again, I am so thankful to Equal Justice America for making the decision to sponsor my work.

Sincerely,

Annie Simunek
DePaul University College of Law
Anticipated Graduation: May 2017

August 24, 2016

Via Email

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

Re: Annie Simunek

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to you regarding Annie Simunek, who was an Equal Justice America Fellow at LAF in the Immigrants and Workers' Rights Practice Group this summer.

Over this summer, Annie worked on a variety of substantive employment and unemployment matters for our clients. This included drafting pleadings and discovery in employment matters that are pending in state and federal court. In addition, Annie handled a number of cases involving claims for unemployment insurance benefits. This included preparing our clients for their hearings and writing briefs. One hearing in particular stands out where Annie worked with our client at great length and prepared his testimony for what turned out to be a two-hour hearing. Our client ultimately prevailed and was awarded benefits, thanks in large part to the careful preparation by Annie.

Annie was a reliable and intelligent summer intern. She did not shrink from taking on many projects, asked the right questions, and completed her assignments thoroughly and on time. She got along well with our clients and made them feel at ease and well-represented.

We are grateful to Annie for her work here at LAF and to Equal Justice America for its support. If you have any questions, or need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Matthew D. Lango

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