

August 25, 2009

Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America
Building II-Suite 204
13450 East Boundary Road
Midlothian Virginia 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben :

I am writing to thank Equal Justice America for supporting my internship at the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law. The Bazelon Center is one of the nation's leading advocates for individuals with mental disabilities and I feel privileged to have interned there. My internship was rewarding and challenging. Most of all, it affirmed my conviction that I want to pursue a career in public interest law, with a specific focus on disability issues.

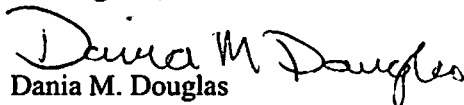
Prior to my internship at Bazelon, I had worked a great deal on physical disability issues. Though I had researched and studied disability law, and issues involving mental disability law, my Bazelon internship afforded me an opportunity to work directly on litigation involving mental health and mental disability law. My internship re-affirmed my notion that disability law is an important civil rights issue and an issue that is often overlooked by other civil rights advocates.

During my internship, I worked on litigation involving prison conditions for individuals with serious mental health issues. I researched the issues involved in this litigation and wrote memos for the attorneys working directly on these issues. I attended planning meetings on a large class-action, special education case that Bazelon is litigating. I investigated issues of custody relinquishment (i.e. that families are often forced to cede custody of children with mental health issues to the state because there is a lack of appropriate, affordable health care for these children) and prepared background summaries for attorneys. I also studied the background of various judicial nominees to help attorneys formulate the impact that such nominees might have on litigation involving individuals with mental disabilities.

Bazelon provided excellent opportunities for summer interns to participate in a wide variety of work, but also to observe the different types work that attorneys do in this field. We attended a trial that Bazelon was litigating in federal district court, over the status of adult group homes in New York. I was also given an opportunity to do small amounts of research on this case. Bazelon staff introduced us to the concept of integrated housing, and allowed us to tour agencies that provide supportive housing to individuals with mental disabilities. They encouraged us to attend hearings, educational meetings, and arranged a series of brown bag lunches for interns to learn more about disability and public interest law.

My experience at the Bazelon Center was truly wonderful and I would like to thank Equal Justice America for making this work possible.

Best regards,


Dania M. Douglas