

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Rd.
Building II, Suite 204
Midlothian, CA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Equal Justice America for providing me with the opportunity to work as a student advocate with the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Project (MiUI) in Ann Arbor, Michigan this summer. Through this experience, I gained a great deal of practical experience and training that will stay with me throughout my entire career as an attorney.

While MiUI focused almost exclusively on advocating for recently unemployed workers who sought unemployment insurance benefits, the work I did on a daily basis was far more varied than I could have ever imagined it would be. One day, I would be advocating for a client in Circuit Court, and the next I would be preparing for a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. I also accepted several opportunities to write amicus briefs and appellate documents. By all means, my experience was far more practical and immersive than I could have ever hoped it would be.

For example, one of my clients was on the brink of losing her home and would be fully bankrupt if she were forced to pay back unemployment benefits that she had rightfully been paid. To protect her privacy, I will refer to her as Mrs. A. Mrs. A has been working for over a year to have the court deem her benefits to have been rightfully paid. When Mrs. A became my client, I had approximately a week to prepare for an oral argument on her appeal to Circuit Court. Due to the outcome of that oral argument, I also worked on an application to the Court of Appeals for her case. Even though her case is still active in the appeals process, I know that without our assistance, she would have been in a much worse position and likely would have had to pay back thousands of dollars to which she had always been entitled.

Another example is Mrs. B (name redacted), who worked as a clerk in a pharmacy. She was terminated due an alleged vendetta that her boss had against her. Her employer contested her unemployment benefits and alleged that she was fired for misconduct. At a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge, we were able to put on sufficient evidence to show that Mrs. B was not fired for misconduct and was entitled to her unemployment benefits. She then became eligible for further benefits, which could have easily meant the difference between success and destitution for someone in her precarious position.

In sum, this summer presented me with an incredible opportunity to make a concrete difference in the lives of individuals who had fallen on hard times. Without

Equal Justice America's assistance, I would not have been able to have this experience, and I surely would not have the skills I now possess. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

David Hopkins
University of Michigan Law School
Juris Doctor Candidate, December 2015