

**DEREK CASH**

August 31, 2014

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 sincerest thanks to Equal Justice America. I spent my summer working on housing issues with Bay Area Legal Aid in San Francisco. San Francisco is in the midst of a major shortage of housing for low and middle income families, so I worked primarily with clients that needed assistance in securing or maintaining affordable housing. Without the support of EJA, I would not have been able to pursue this work.

As a clerk with Bay Area Legal Aid, I was responsible for the cases of approximately 15 clients, some of which I oversaw from initial intake to the final resolution of the client's issue. One such client, James, came to Bay Area Legal Aid upon discovering that, because of a miscalculation by the public housing authority, he had been overpaying his rent and utility bills for the last three years. When he tried to notify the housing authority of the error, he was repeatedly ignored or dismissed. I worked with James to calculate his appropriate rent and utility payments, and advocated on his behalf with the housing authority to reduce his bills to the appropriate levels. Ultimately, we obtained not only a reduction in James's rent, but a reimbursement of the approximately \$3000 he had overpaid during the last three years. With his reimbursement, James was able to pay off debts accrued as a result of his higher rent and utility bills.

Another client with whom I worked was Suzanne. After the death of her husband, Suzanne could no longer afford the apartment unit in which she had been living and was facing eviction. Though she had been looking for a more affordable unit, Suzanne suffered from a debilitating illness that hindered her ability to effectively search for an apartment. Even when she managed to get on the waitlist for an apartment, she was afraid that she would be evicted and become homeless before an affordable unit became available to her. I was able to obtain for Suzanne an extension of her lease as an accommodation for disability in order to give her more time to find a new apartment without the looming fear of eviction.

Stable housing is such a critical factor to the well-being of an individual or family because it bears so heavily on one's ability to obtain employment, to cultivate a strong support network of friends and family, and to maintain a sense of personal security. I am grateful to EJA for making it possible for me to work with Bay Area Legal Aid on this issue to help improve the lives of low income persons in San Francisco. Too often, low income Americans find our legal system to be inaccessible or deaf to their concerns. Your organization's commitment to making the legal system work for these Americans as well is truly commendable.

Sincerely,



Derek Cash  
JD Candidate, 2015  
Harvard Law School