

October 5, 2017

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, I interned at Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition and worked in their Detained Children's Program. CAIR Coalition is the only non-profit in the area that provides legal assistance to detained immigrants held in detention facilities in Virginia and Maryland. One of the children's detention centers CAIR Coalition serves is Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center (SVJC), which is one of only two secure detention facilities in the U.S. While at CAIR, I had the opportunity to visit SVJC multiple times to conduct intake interviews with children new to the facility and conduct follow-ups with children CAIR Coalition was already representing.

Of all of the clients I was fortunate enough to help this summer, one in particular stands out. This client had been detained at SVJC for almost one year without any explanation for his prolonged detention in a secure facility and without any explanation why he had not yet been released to his mother, who was a viable sponsor. This client was not the only child at SVJC in this situation, there are many children throughout detention centers in the U.S. facing the same situation. But, it was not until the Ninth Circuit decision in *Flores v. Sessions* on July 5, 2017 that these children were provided an avenue to challenge their prolonged detention through "bond" custody redetermination hearings before Immigration Judges. CAIR Coalition attorneys

took on this client's case and brought the first custody redetermination hearing before an Immigration Judge after the *Flores* decision. I was lucky enough to help draft the motion submitted to the court, prepare the exhibits submitted, and work with the client to prepare him to testify at the hearing. I was also able to attend and observe the hearing in court.

My experience at CAIR Coalition was eye-opening and educational. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work and learn from the incredible attorneys at CAIR Coalition. I am thankful for EJA's help in making it possible.

Solangel Gonzalez
George Washington University