



August 18, 2017

Equal Justice America,

My work as a Legal Intern in the Consumer Rights Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) this summer was funded in part by an Equal Justice America Summer 2017 Fellowship. Thank you for giving me this great opportunity. At GBLS, through the example and instruction of my supervising attorneys and my research projects, I learned about providing direct client services and the great need for strong consumer advocacy in our complex modern economy. Moving forward, I will try to leverage these lessons in a way that protects and empowers vulnerable consumers.

During my internship I participated in various forms of direct advocacy for low- and moderate-income people. I conducted intake interviews with clients facing post-foreclosure eviction and maintained communication with them while drafting pleadings, motions, and other litigation documents on their behalf. In doing so, I felt the challenge of moving between the lawyer's task of understanding a client's challenges and priorities, including what feels important to them in the midst of trying circumstances, and understanding the analytic and dry processes that govern the dispute.

I also assisted attorneys and paralegals in providing limited representation to defendants being sued by debt collection companies in high-volume small claims courts through GBLS's Lawyer for the Day program. Helping in small claims court gave me the opportunity to see a kind of high-speed, miniaturized version of the entire litigation process—we performed intakes, reviewed documents, negotiated with opposing counsel, and, if need be, argued in hearings all in a period of a few hours for a handful of clients each day. This helped me gain a summarized understanding of litigation as a whole and of the relational dynamics that mark each stage. It also let me feel the weight of having people rely on me and my understand of the law relevant to their circumstances and to observe how my supervising attorneys managed that weight and strove to communicate clearly at all times.

The totality of these experiences impress on me the great need for strong consumer advocacy. The consumer transactions that matter the most to people of low- and moderate-means are also the most complicated, like, for example, taking out student loans or purchasing a home. This complexity creates vulnerability, particularly as layers of corporate entities pursue their legal obligation to increase shareholder's return on investment. Researching current consumer issues, including mandatory arbitration clauses in consumer contracts, tax lien sales and foreclosure processes, and debt collection licensing requirements, has clarified the steep disadvantage one-

<August 18, 2017>

Page 2

shot participants face against the repeat players they meet when entering into complicated transactions and the disputes that arise from them.

And these disadvantages will likely only intensify for the rest of my life. Complexity rarely ramps down, particularly when powerful people benefit from it. Therefore, I will seek to advocate for low- and moderate-income consumers as effectively as possible and to encourage others to do the same. Thank you for your investment in me, and I hope it proves fruitful.

Sincerely,

Nate Szyman
JD Candidate 2018
Harvard Law School