

To Dan Ruben, Executive Director at Equal Justice America:

With bitter-sweetness, my fellowship at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia has recently wended to an end. Bitter, because of the sadness in having to depart from an internship and organization I have grown to love; sweet, for I am left with the satisfying feeling that I have both learned an incredible amount and helped a lot of people during the course of my fellowship.

During my 2L summer at Community Legal Services, I was fortunate enough to be able to work in the public benefits unit under the mentorship of Richard Weishaupt— a seasoned poverty attorney with several decades of advocacy experience. Under his guidance, I was able to assist clients with a variety of issues related to their SSI disability, Medicaid, and food stamp benefits. My day-to-day work often involved collaborating with clients, Social Security Agency officials, and Public Welfare employees to problem-solve different solutions for public benefit problems. In addition to this relatively “informal advocacy,” I also assisted Richard on a few federal briefs that involved Constitutional Due Process issues, such as the accessibility of interpreters at hearings and the satisfaction of notice requirements in an SSI context. Although this advocacy was challenging and sometimes progressed more slowly than I might desire, it was also endlessly gratifying and immensely rewarding.

Although I take great pride in all of the assistance I was able to lend to clients this past summer, there is one particular client who I will not soon forget. As a young woman, this client had contended with severe health problems that prevented her from maintaining employment, as well as crippling debt obligations. Although she had been receiving SSI disability benefits, the Social Security Agency had incorrectly calculated her income, and consequently, they had been improperly awarding her reduced disability benefits. After I discovered this oversight, I was able to negotiate a resolution with the Social Security Agency that resulted in a settlement for our client in excess of \$10,000. This backpayment will enable her to pay off much of her debt and establish a much more secure financial position. Needless to say, calling her to relay this information was a truly memorable and satisfying experience— as well as a strong reminder of all the reasons why I decided to enroll in law school in the first place.

Additionally, there were several other clients who I am particularly proud to have been able to assist this summer, including a breast cancer survivor awaiting disability benefits, an elderly disabled woman cut off from food stamps, and a developmentally challenged child who had been denied SSI, amongst many others.

I was fortunate enough to observe Richard during several SSI administrative hearings, and although the hearing that I was scheduled to personally direct has been postponed, Richard has generously offered to allow me to come back to complete this hearing next month.

More broadly, this fellowship has reminded me of the importance of championing public benefits programs so that they remain robust and easily accessible. Programs like SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and TANF all provide an invaluable safeguard to the violence inherent in poverty. As an advocate assisting clients this summer, I grew increasingly more aware of how key a role these programs play in alleviating the misery intrinsic to poverty. I am now more determined than ever to use my law degree in a way that allows me to advocate for the expansion and protection of these public benefit programs— which are currently quite vulnerable in our existing political climate.

In general, I could not have asked for a better fellowship experience. I feel so fortunate to have been able to work with such great colleagues and staff at CLS, and particularly, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Richard Weishaupt for his mentorship. I am also thankful for having been able to work with some amazing clients, whose courage and dignity, despite extreme adversity, has inspired me more than they will ever know. Finally, I am incredibly thankful and appreciative of Equal Justice America for making this fellowship possible by funding my summer internship. Please know that your support has not only helped provide expanded legal assistance to lower-income Philadelphians, but selfishly, it has also enabled me to pursue the legal career path that I have always dreamed of following. Words simply cannot express how grateful I am for Equal Justice America's support in making this internship viable. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you!

Gratefully,

Jack Regenbogen
J.D. Candidate, 2015
University of Pennsylvania Law School



COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
OF PHILADELPHIA

August 21, 2014

Dan Ruben
Equal Justice Works
Via Email

Re: Jack Regenbogen

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you very much for supporting the internship of Jack Regenbogen. Jack worked for us this summer after having worked with us during the school year as an extern from Penn Law School. We thus already knew Jack and were happy to take him on for our highly competitive summer program. His performance over the summer was excellent. He did a combination of individual representation, mostly in the SSI area, and legal research leading to legal research and writing under my supervision. Many of the individual SSI cases were difficult, involved cases that required him to research highly technical areas, explain them to clients and help them to conform with the rules of the program. Jack excelled in working on these cases and earned the respect and trust of our clients. I was particularly impressed with the sensitive way he helped represent a refugee client of ours who spoke very little English and who had cultural issues as well. Jack did an excellent job working with the client and his extended family through an interpreter and established a level of trust that vastly improved our ability to represent the client. Similarly, Jack worked with me on a number of other individual cases and did an excellent job. All of our clients sang Jack's praises when I spoke to them.

Jack also helped me write a brief in Federal Court for a client appealing her denial of benefits and wrote a first draft of a complaint in a planned class action case we intend to file in September. Once again, his work was very good and his research and writing skills were obvious. As important, Jack took constructive criticism and suggestions extremely well, and his subsequent drafts showed that he had absorbed the comments and suggestions and improved the initial product.

In short, Jack has shown himself to be a bright, motivated advocate who cares deeply about our mutual clients. He sees the big picture and has a good eye for detail. He is also a good team

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player and gets along well with staff here as well as our clients. It has been a pleasure working with him.

Sincerely,

Richard Weishaupt

Richard Weishaupt
Senior Attorney