

May 12, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for funding my work as a student director of the Yale Law School Temporary Restraining Order Project during the 2013-2014 school year. As one of the six student directors, I was responsible for overseeing an office at the New Haven Superior Courthouse that is staffed by Yale Law School Student volunteers. I set schedules, trained and supervised our over 50 volunteers, and helped to coordinate with our supervising attorneys at New Haven Legal Assistance and court staff.

Our program assists pro se applicants for temporary civil restraining orders in family court in New Haven. Our applicants are typically victims of domestic violence and have faced and continue to face threats of serious physical violence. Our volunteers help applicants complete the required paperwork and prepare affidavits detailing their need for a restraining order. We also follow up to ensure that the restraining orders are served on the respondent and that the applicant appears for the hearing on the extension of the restraining order.

As I have explained, a good deal of my work as a student director is managerial or administrative. However, like all of our project volunteers, I also work shifts at our office in the courthouse, where I work firsthand with applicants for restraining orders. Working with the applicants is a tremendously rewarding and eye-opening experience. They come to us at a moment of great need, and we attempt to assist applicants with the complicated logistics of the process while also providing them with an empathetic, supportive environment.

To explain the work that we do, I would like to tell you about April, a 25 year old mother of one from North Haven who came to our office this spring.¹ April had been seeking a child support order against Mauricio, the father of her three year old child. During their relationship, Mauricio had been physically abusive, on one occasion pushing April out of a moving car. Mauricio was angry that April was trying to get him to pay child support, and had made physically threatening comments to her on Facebook and in the courthouse. Because of these violent threats, April was seeking a restraining order protecting her and her daughter from Mauricio. With my assistance, April was able to craft a compelling affidavit explaining her need for a restraining order to the

¹ April is a pseudonym. To protect the confidentiality of our clients, some details have been changed.

judge. She applied for and was granted a full temporary restraining order, preventing Mauricio from contacting her, harassing her, or coming within 50 yards of her or her daughter.

The type of abuse that April suffered is fairly typical of the types of situations that our applicants face. While we did not solve all of April's problems on that one day in the spring, we did take an important step in assuring that she had legal protection from Mauricio. She told me that she was grateful for the assistance of our office. I believe that we were able to provide technical assistance to her in a nonjudgmental, welcoming atmosphere. I enjoy working with clients like April, learning about their situations and legal needs, and helping them pursue relief from abuse.

I am grateful to Equal Justice America and to your funders for giving me the opportunity to participate in this valuable project. The fellowship makes it possible for our directors to continue to continue the work of the TRO Project and to provide assistance to dozens of restraining order applicants each year. We thank you for the support of our project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jake Siegel". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jake Siegel
Yale Law School '15