

August 25, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you very much for awarding me an EJA summer fellowship. As you know, I have spent the summer working as a legal intern at the New York Legal Assistance Group in the Domestic Violence Clinical Center. In this position, I represented victims of domestic violence in their family court matters, particularly family offense and custody cases. I helped these clients to receive orders of protection and custody orders, which kept them safe and allowed them to remain with their children. It has been an amazing summer and I hugely appreciate the funding that allowed me to have this experience.

Much of my work this summer involved interviewing clients to assess their needs and hear their stories, filing motions and petitions on their behalf, and representing them in their court appearances. I was able to form relationships with my clients and was consistently awed by their strength in the face of significant challenges. One of my clients moved to the United States with her husband and son in 2013 and spoke almost no English. She had been the victim of severe physical and emotional abuse by her husband in her home country, where such behavior was not considered a crime. The abuse continued upon the move, becoming even more severe even though she was pregnant. Separated from her friends and family and isolated due to her lack of English language skills, she became extremely depressed and hopeless.

Finally in May 2014, neighbors happened to overhear one of her husband's attacks and called the police. The police arrested her husband and legal proceedings began. We have represented this client for several months, supporting her to file her family offense petition and custody petition. While her case is still ongoing, she has received a temporary order of protection and a temporary order of sole custody, allowing her to live with her children, safely away from her husband. She has been taking English classes and her language skills have improved at an incredible rate. It has also been wonderful to see a change in her spirits over the past few months. Working with this client has been an incredibly rewarding experience, and is only one example of the fantastic work I have been able to do this summer.

Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,

Kirby Tyrrell

Columbia Law School, Class of 2016