

Lauren C. Liebes

August 5, 2005

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you for the opportunity to receive an Equal Justice America grant for my work at Public Counsel Law Center

My summer at Public Counsel included many learning experiences in and out of the office. I spent a day in “Skid Row”, an area that “houses” up to 90,000 homeless people. Public Counsel took us on a tour to teach us about services that are offered to homeless clients and to show us how devastating living in Skid Row can be.

I also had the privilege to appear with a formerly homeless client who has gotten his life back on track. I was able to help him get “quality of life” offenses (like riding the Metro without a token) dismissed from his record through Public Counsel’s Homeless Court project. This allowed my client to move on with his life and maintain employment.

However, the bulk of my work this summer was through the Child Care Law Project at Public Counsel. The Child Care Law Project at Public Counsel assists low-income childcare providers who offer the important service of childcare in their home. The project also assists non-profit childcare centers with legal issues.

I spent much of my time on client intake. I was able to interact with many clients and help them resolve many different types of issues. The client issues that I worked on ranged from Landlord-Tenant issues to zoning problems. I also assisted the Directing Attorney with legal research regarding potential litigations and Leases for Child Care Centers.

I feel I made a difference in the community through my work one-on-one with the providers. However, my biggest client this summer was not an actual person – it was several cities around Los Angeles County. Most of the law that governs childcare is determined by the state legislature. The state has set guidelines that determine capacity levels of family day care homes and determined that the permit process to operate a family day care must be as economical as possible.

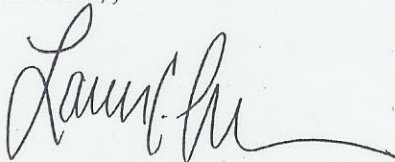
However, there are several cities within Los Angeles County that have not updated their Municipal Codes. These codes are out of compliance with state law and create an undue

burden on child care providers who are in compliance with state law but not city law. Often, these cities have created unduly burdensome permit processes by charging thousands of dollars for a provider to obtain a permit. Additionally, there are cities whose childcare capacity limits are out of compliance with state law. Throughout the summer I worked with City Planners in two cities (Maywood, CA and Hawthorne, CA) to educate them on these issues and highlight the importance of affordable, accessible childcare.

While the City of Maywood remains resistant to change, the City of Hawthorne is updating its code. At the end of my tenure a new ordinance governing childcare was scheduled to go to the Hawthorne City Council in September 2005. This new ordinance will impact of the providers in Hawthorne by providing a clear permit process and will allow for increased capacity as dictated by state law.

My experience in Public Counsel has been amazing. Professionally, my legal writing and reasoning skills have improved. I also learned that I enjoy working with the law outside of the classroom in a real life situation. Personally, because of my time at Public Counsel, I now have a greater appreciation for the people who are struggling in Los Angeles. I know that I will continue to be involved in Pro Bono work throughout my legal career.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lauren C. Liebes", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lauren C. Liebes
Southwestern University School of Law
Class of 2007