

August 22, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

In light of the recent fellowship I received from Equal Justice America, I would like to take a brief moment to express my sincere gratitude to the donors who made this possible and share a little about my summer experience at Legal Services of South Central Michigan (LSSCM). I immensely appreciate your generous contribution to my legal education through practical experience.

During this summer, I worked alongside an attorney at LSSCM who mostly handled family cases involving domestic violence. One of the first cases I had a chance to work on involved a mother of three children. The woman had recorded several arguments that she had with her husband. One of these recordings included a lot of yelling, the woman being choked, and the voice of one of the children who happened to witness the end of the argument, when the husband choked his wife. In this case, the woman's LSSCM attorney was able to play the recording in court, which convinced the judge that the children should be with the mother full time temporarily. For better or for worse, this case concluded with the parents having split custody of the children because the children expressed an interest in being with both parents. Our client did not want to fight the order, if that is what her children wanted. In this way, the case was very instrumental in teaching me that my future job as an attorney is to educate my clients on what the options are and what I might perceive to be best; however, the final decision is up to them. And it is imperative, especially in domestic violence situations, that my clients feel empowered to make their own decisions.

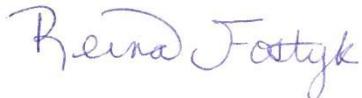
Our office also takes many housing cases. One of the final cases of the summer for me included working a case from start to finish. In this case, our client was an elderly disabled man in a wheelchair who lived in Section 8 housing with his wife, who could not read or write. The couple also had a live-in caretaker for the husband's many physical needs. The caretaker and some people at the apartment management had an altercation. As a result, the landlord wanted the caretaker evicted but would allow the elderly couple to stay. However, our client did not want a new caretaker because he had the same one for twelve years. Also, our client's voucher was project-based, so he could not simply move to another apartment and keep his housing voucher. Thus, our goal had to be to keep the client in his current situation or find him a place to go that also had project-based vouchers available. This case required many phone calls between me, opposing counsel, a housing agency, and the client. In the end, I was able to negotiate a settlement with the landlord to give the client enough time to move into another project-based site. I also was able to represent the client in court (under

supervision of an attorney) to ensure that the client's agreement was accurately put on the record. This case was the most energizing to me because I was able to see it through from start to finish.

In between the two cases I have described in detail, I was able to serve many other clients as well. One of them included a very scared and anxious college student who had been assaulted by another student on campus. Another included a mother of ten children who finally decided that she had had enough of her husband's rape and that her family had had enough of the verbal abuse. She wanted a divorce. Another included building rapport with a client who had been historically tight-lipped with my supervising attorney. Because of the rapport that I was able to build over the phone, the client disclosed a lot of previously unknown information that was going to be helpful in her case going forward. Finally, I was able to serve another client who came to our office for an in-person intake. The woman was hard of hearing and found it difficult to communicate over the phone. She had just lost her spouse and needed some help with probate issues. Our office does not handle any probate, but we were able to refer her to a pro bono attorney. I will forever remember this lesbian woman, who looked at me with tears in her eyes, and said that no one had ever helped her in her entire life. All of these cases are still ongoing, but I am grateful for the opportunity I had to serve these people during my summer. I am also amazed at how bright and hopeful so many of these abused women are!

I hope that in reading this brief letter you have sensed the impact of your contribution to my summer experience. For your direct role in helping me pursue my passion for public interest work, I am extremely grateful.

Sincerely,



Reina Fostyk
Michigan State University College of Law
Juris Doctor expected May 2018

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Dear Mr. Ruben,

As Supervising Attorney at Legal Services of South Central Michigan (LSSCM), I select and oversee the students who serve with our public interest attorneys throughout the year. Because of the nature and high volume of our office, the students who work with us are extremely valuable in allowing our office to assist the number of people that we do. I try to communicate to them often that they are making a difference every day! During our summer 2016 program, Ms. Fostyk was assigned to assist an attorney in our office.

Ms. Fostyk worked with attorney Jessica Maas on many domestic violence family law cases. On these cases, Ms. Fostyk assisted with client intake and interviews, prepared pleadings and observed some hearings.

Ms. Fostyk also worked on a few housing law cases. These cases were inherently faster paced and required quick follow up. In both cases, Ms. Fostyk communicated directly with LSSCM's clients. On one case, I supervised her appearance in front of Judge Boyd at the 55th District Court in Mason, Michigan. For this case, Ms. Fostyk was able to negotiate a settlement agreement and instill confidence in our client that our office would be able to assist them in getting moved to another affordable apartment.

Ms. Fostyk also participated in the Eviction Diversion Program in Ingham County in Mason, Michigan and in Livingston County in Brighton, Michigan. In both locations, Ms. Fostyk and other students were assigned clients in landlord/tenant cases. The students then work to find the best solutions for the tenants facing eviction proceedings. Usually, these cases end in settlement agreements, and often, our students are able to reduce the amount owed and get our clients a few extra days to pay the required amount of unpaid rent.

Overall, Ms. Fostyk's time at LSSCM was great. She has exceeded expectations and I have enjoyed working with her.

Sincerely,

Ms. Elizabeth Rios P69526
LSSCM Supervising Attorney

"...there can be no equal justice where the kind of trial...(one) enjoys depends on the amount of money (one) has."

--Hon. Hugo Black, *Griffin v Illinois*, 351 US 12 (1956)

