

August 30, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I first want to thank you and Equal Justice America for awarding me this summer fellowship. I would not have had the rewarding experience I had without this award. Throughout the entire process you and your staff assisted me with my questions regarding not only the EJA Fellowship, but concerns I had with other fellowships not affiliated with Equal Justice America. This assistance truly showed your and EJA's interest in creating a memorable and rewarding summer experience for fellowship recipients.

This summer I interned at Legal Assistance of Western New York in the Ithaca, NY office. I had a great experience working at a legal services office. All the attorneys I worked with were deeply committed in providing out clients with legal assistance in order to meet their basic needs. It was a rewarding experience to work on behalf of clients who truly needed legal services and to work alongside such motivated and passionate attorneys. I was fortunate enough to work closely with each of the attorneys in the Ithaca office. Each of the attorneys and other staff members within the Ithaca office were friendly, helpful, and truly wanted to make my summer a great experience.

Throughout the summer I worked on a variety of cases, including: social security disability cases, Medicaid cases, pro se divorce cases, and unemployment insurance benefits cases. I had the opportunity to draft letters of appeal for unemployment insurance benefits cases, Medicaid Personal Care Services cases, and a Medicaid Buy-Program case. I performed research, and developed my client contact skills. I believe the best experience I had this summer was interacting with clients. I conducted client intakes and kept in touch with clients over the phone daily.

Although I worked on many different cases, I primarily worked on unemployment insurance cases. I had the opportunity to work closely with the unemployment law staff attorney daily. I observed client intakes and unemployment insurance hearings. I also assisted her with research for the unemployment insurance hearings. Kelly gave me the opportunity to conduct client intakes and draft a letter of appeal for a particular client.

One of my most memorable assignments involved a Medicaid Personal Care Services case. The Department of Social Services discontinued our clients' personal care services under Medicaid. I worked with another staff member to investigate and draft letters to the clients' caseworker in hopes of settling the matter. Unfortunately, I couldn't see the outcome of the case. However, the stories of these clients are particular memorable because of their reliance on our

office to restore their well being. I enjoyed working on these cases because it evidences the work legal services handles daily. I am grateful that I spent my summer at an organization that truly assists clients with their needs.

Thank you for awarding me this fellowship. I hope to contribute to your organization in the future.

Sincerely,

Melissa Barahona  
University of Michigan

August 23, 2011

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

**RE: Melissa Barahona's Summer Fellowship**

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am a staff attorney at Tompkins/Tioga Neighborhood Legal Services, a division of Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc.® Melissa Barahona joined our office this summer as an intern, focusing on unemployment insurance benefits hearings and appeals. She also worked on pro se divorce cases, disability cases, and housing issues.

Melissa was able to get some hands-on experience, as she met with several clients at different stages of their cases. She observed unemployment hearings and drafted an appeal brief. She also drafted letters to agencies and advocated on behalf of clients. Melissa also met with clients during the pro se divorce process. In addition to direct service work, Melissa also drafted letters to agencies to advocate on behalf of clients.

Melissa always had a positive attitude, and was willing to work on any task assigned to her. She maintained a calm demeanor while assisting difficult clients. Melissa completed tasks within the required time deadlines, got up to speed quickly, and was very organized.

Overall, Melissa was a positive addition to our office this summer, and we would welcome any future interns who show the same professionalism and willingness to work with clients. Melissa was able to directly assist almost thirty low-income clients during her summer internship. We support Equal Justice America and other programs that allow our organization to assist more clients and the community as a whole. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Kelly McGovern  
Staff Attorney