

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

August 8, 2017

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to thank Equal Justice America (EJA) for supporting my internship at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) during the summer of 2017. AFC protects every child's right to an education, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are struggling in school or experiencing school discrimination of any kind. I am grateful for EJA's support of this wonderful opportunity.

At AFC, I was engaged mainly in direct legal services and worked with five clients. Four of my clients were Spanish-speaking parents and guardians. My ability to communicate with them in their native language often put them at ease and allowed me to build rapport quickly during intake meetings. I enjoyed the relationship building aspect of direct legal services, which was critical to developing case goals, strategizing, and planning effectively with families.

Throughout my internship, I focused on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). I prepared families and assisted attorneys with arguments for IEP meetings to secure appropriate services for children. When a school placement was inappropriate, I worked closely with families to find school options that could meet the child's needs, accompanied families on school visits, and helped families navigate the school admissions process. During the summer, two of my clients successfully attained acceptance to appropriate school placements and another two received improved IEPs. The fifth client's case is ongoing.

In addition to direct legal services, I worked on a policy project and a lengthy legal memorandum. The policy project was a reform initiative aimed at improving access to preschool special education evaluations. With the guidance of an attorney supervisor, I drafted survey questions and collected data from preschool special education evaluation agencies. The data will inform the next steps for the project. I also wrote a comprehensive legal memorandum reviewing Section 504 litigation from the past year, focusing mainly on the Second Circuit. The memorandum updated AFC's knowledge base around Section 504 and will support future litigation.

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at AFC and genuinely appreciate the generous support of the EJA fellowship. I am also excited to inform you that I have been invited to continue at AFC as an intern during the fall of 2017. I look forward to the opportunity to partner with EJA again in the fall.

Sincerely,

Jason A. Pedraza
J.D. Candidate 2019
NYU School of Law



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

August 31, 2017

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II – Suite 204
13450 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Via email: Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

Re: Jason Pedraza, Equal Justice Fellowship at Advocates for Children of New York,
Summer 2017

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am a staff attorney at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). I had the pleasure of supervising Jason Pedraza, a rising second year law student, this summer during his internship with AFC. At AFC, we are dedicated to protecting every child's right to an education, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are struggling in school or experiencing school discrimination of any kind. We represent parents and guardians in various educational matters including, assisting them throughout the Special Education process, including challenging Department of Education (DOE) decisions and recommendations for students with disabilities through the Impartial Hearing Process, reviewing records, locating appropriate school placements for students, and assisting with behavioral and disciplinary matters, such as suspension hearings.

During his time at AFC, Jason worked on a wide range of tasks. Jason drafted questions for client intakes, requested and reviewed student records, researched specialized school options for students, accompanied parents on school visits, advocated for families at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and researched relevant law to assist with client representation. The parents and families that Jason worked with came from a variety of backgrounds, but all of these families came from low-income backgrounds. Jason was able to easily establish a rapport with all of the families and students he worked with, and his fluency in Spanish was extremely helpful in connecting with clients.

Throughout his internship, Jason's work was exceptional and timely. Jason was unanimously described by other staff members as a terrific intern and advocate.

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Jason took on challenging cases and worked diligently to establish a relationship with clients and assist in achieving case goals. Other staff members who worked with Jason stated that he was crucial to securing the client's desired goals and outcomes. Jason is organized, reliable, responsive, and excellent with clients. He worked diligently and efficiently throughout his internship and incorporated feedback effortlessly. Jason happily worked extra hours necessary to complete the tasks he was assigned and we are delighted that he offered to continue to work on cases throughout the school year in order to continue assisting our clients.

Jason was an exceptional intern and a fantastic advocate for the clients he assisted during his internship. We are excited to continue to work with Jason. Thank you for providing the funds that allowed Jason to spend his summer at AFC.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if you need further information.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Perrone
Staff Attorney
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