

R. Ian Evans

September 24, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

During my summer at Mazzoni Center Legal Services, I was exposed to a diverse range of legal challenges facing low-income LGBT individuals in Philadelphia. Mazzoni Center Legal Services is Pennsylvania's only direct legal services organization serving the needs of the LGBT community, and my summer at Mazzoni allowed me to assist dozens of clients in matters including change of name, trust and estates, adoption, divorce, and discrimination.

The most common cases I saw during my time at Mazzoni were name change cases for transgender individuals. Though the process is a standardized procedure that seldom changed from client to client, the name change often represents a crucial, sometimes final, step in the development of a client's gender identity. Some of my clients were intimidated by the prospect of dealing with the court system, some were trying to avoid trouble at their jobs by making sure that their names matched their gender expression, and some were struggling to finalize their transition and leave behind an abusive relationship. For every single person, the name change process was a very personal experience, with a goal of achieving something that most people take for granted: the ability to carry on with one's life and be recognized by the larger world as the person we feel we are inside. Presenting my clients with certified name change orders that allowed them to change their driver's license, birth certificate, passport and social security card often left them with feelings of fulfillment that always brightened the day. It's astounding the peace of mind that such a simple

action can provide, and facilitating a client's peace of mind was one of the more rewarding experiences of my summer.

Another, more involved case came from a client that needed Mazzoni Center Legal Services to draft a will and powers of attorney for healthcare and financial matters. Not all of Mazzoni Center's clients were low-income individuals. Some, like this client, could afford to pay for legal services however wanted the sensitivity and expertise that Mazzoni Center could provide regarding the unique needs of LGBT clients. This gentleman was estranged from his entire family and the executor of his estate as well as his agent for his powers of attorney was located on the other side of the country. Further, he needed the will and powers of attorney drafted in anticipation of undergoing a major surgery in the near future. Working under the close supervision of Mazzoni Center Legal Services' staff attorney Barrett Marshall, I drafted the client's will and his powers of attorney carefully, informing him throughout the process what implications certain language would create as far as the execution of his wishes was concerned. This was the first will that I have ever had a role in drafting, and it felt good to apply the principles I'd learned in my first year Property class in practice. The client's relief and satisfaction at the close of our representation was palpable.

Reflecting on this experience, I have come to realize that my best prospects of a satisfying career in the law will not be found in the high-rise offices of a corporate litigation firm. Instead, my summer at Mazzoni Center Legal Services has confirmed that I will find what I'm looking for in a career serving the public interest, representing those who have few other champions and serving the cause of equal justice for all. I thank you and the staff at Equal Justice America for helping me achieve such a rewarding summer experience.

Sincerely,

R. Ian Evans

Temple University Beasley School of Law, Class of 2016