

August 13, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to express my gratitude to Equal Justice America for funding my summer internship in the Employment Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services. My experience this summer confirmed for me that my decision to attend law school was the right one and that my career in legal services will be the most rewarding and fulfilling path I can possibly imagine.

I spent most of my time this summer helping clients navigate the unemployment insurance (UI) appeals process. Most of our clients were unemployed, their UI benefits being their only source of income while they looked for jobs in this incredibly difficult economy. I was appalled, although not entirely surprised, to learn that many employers automatically challenge their former employees' rights to UI benefits, no matter how weak the case. And so my clients found themselves needing to face their former employers in administrative hearings before a Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) Review Examiner, a process that can be overwhelming for clients as well as emotionally taxing.

This summer, I had the great privilege of preparing four clients for their UI appeals hearings. We practiced how to handle harsh questioning by an employer's representative or the Review Examiner. Working together, we carefully crafted a set of direct examination questions that would allow me to help the client tell his or her side of the story while building our legal argument.

Our preparation paid off. In my first hearing of the summer, we successfully defended my client's right to her UI benefits by proving that her former supervisor's accusations were unfounded. In my second hearing, we overturned the DUA's initial denial of UI benefits by proving that my client did not knowingly violate a company policy and that the company's decision to terminate him was discretionary. The employer failed to appear at my third hearing; because it was an employer appeal, my client wins unless the employer appeals the notice of default. And in my fourth

hearing, we successfully proved that my client had good cause for returning her request for a hearing after the ten-day deadline.

Throughout the summer, my supervising attorneys and other staff at GBLS provided valuable training, expert advice, supportive feedback, as well as significant autonomy. In addition to representing clients in administrative hearings, I wrote a legal brief for a client appealing a DUA Board of Review (BOR) decision to district court and I prepared a complaint for another client appealing a BOR decision. I also had the opportunity to write research memos and conduct intake interviews with numerous clients.

This summer, I learned that I love being able to listen to a client's story and then help him or her tell the story in a forum and in a format that may be unfamiliar and intimidating for the client. I love being able to help clients navigate the state bureaucracy and a legal system that too often favor the rich and the powerful. For me, this is what it means to be a legal advocate, a career that I will pursue with passion.

Sincerely,

Rachel Smit
Boston University School of Law
Juris Doctor Candidate 2013