

September 18, 2014

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, Virginia 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My name is Robert Zielinski and I was fortunate enough to receive a 2014 Summer Fellowship from Equal Justice America to fund my internship experience at LAF (f/k/a Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago). I would like to express my gratitude to you and the rest of the organization for my excellent fellowship experience this past summer.

As a member of LAF's Children and Families Practice Group, I worked closely with supervising attorneys on an array of divorce, child welfare, and domestic violence matters. My most memorable case this summer involved a Polish-American woman who I was able to uniquely guide through a divorce settlement by using my Polish language skills. She had immigrated to the United States from Poland on false promises by her now ex-husband. Her hard work and sacrifice toward the marital home went unnoticed as her spouse abused her and hid financial information from her throughout the duration of their marriage. LAF was able to secure her independence and give her a fresh start by winning a just settlement. She was sincerely grateful that LAF had taken the time to help her through this emotionally difficult time in her life and the experience confirmed by desire to help low-income community members find equal access to legal representation.

This summer also helped to confirm my interest in litigation. The senior attorneys at LAF made sure to give me a substantial amount of experience in Cook County Domestic Relations Court. While previously shy and lacking in self-confidence, the continued practice developed both my written and oral legal skills. My internship culminated with a hearing in the Domestic Violence Division where I was given the unique opportunity to help one of LAF's clients extend an order of protection against her violent and abusive partner. She and her one-year-old child had endured physical and verbal abuse for the duration of the mother's relationship. It was very rewarding to represent her in court under a temporary student license and see firsthand the impact of civil legal services organizations.

Once again, thank you very much for sponsoring my fellowship at LAF this summer. It was an incredibly gratifying experience and I hope to pursue a career in public interest law in Illinois. My 2014 EJA Summer Fellowship went a long way in making that a real possibility.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Zielinski
J.D. Candidate, 2015
University of Pennsylvania Law School