

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I spent my fellowship advocating for the victims of the recent San Francisco housing crisis. My organization, the San Francisco Bar Association- Justice and Diversity Center, the Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP) is responsible for providing full scope eviction defense litigation for people currently being evicted. Most of our clients suffer from mental disabilities, are low-income, or the elderly. As a San Francisco native, the housing epidemic is a situation dear to me and I am honored to have spent my summer keeping people housed.

While interning at HAP, I had the opportunity to engage directly with clients and saw most aspects of the litigation process, just short of a full trial. My supervisor entrusted me with prepping pre-trial motions, interviewing clients, and legal writing and research relating to public housing. My work was particularly rewarding because I knew that my legal drafting would immediately have an effect on a person's ability to remain in their home.

As stated earlier, most HAP clients are mentally ill or the elderly. One particular client was an elderly veteran who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He was being evicted from his home for an alleged nuisance. He was a native San Franciscan, in a rent controlled unit, and the only resident in his apartment. His building was the only old building in the area, surrounded by newly renovated apartments; it was the ultimate picture of gentrification in San Francisco. Although, he eventually agreed to a move out settlement, I was satisfied that he received the settlement he wanted with ample time and support to find housing in San Francisco. Another client was a mentally and physically disabled woman who was being evicted for non-payment of rent recently after her husband died. This client was living in inhabitable conditions run by a slumlord. We were eventually able to get her rental assistance, improved living conditions, and the ability to stay in her home.

These two cases resonated the most with me because they are an example of some of the most vulnerable people in San Francisco being effectively pushed out of their homes by more powerful entities. My work at HAP helped me solidify my desire to continue with public interest work. I had a fulfilling summer because I was able to advocate for our clients and save their homes. I believe that everyone deserves equal access to services since there is such a disparity in the legal system between the wealthy and the poor. I am delighted that I was able to spend my summer assisting people who needed help the most.

Best,

Kristina Rosales