

August 31, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I had the privilege of working at the University of Michigan's Clinical Law Program (MCLP), where I gained valuable experience in a wide variety of poverty law practice areas under the tutelage of four superb attorneys. My assignments ran the gamut from assisting low-income clients in eviction proceedings to conducting research for a petition for certiorari challenging the ex post facto application of draconian sex offender laws. In between, I engaged in projects like analyzing the civil rights claims of indigent prisoners and drafting FOIA requests investigating the treatment of mentally-ill prisoners in Michigan state prisons. I also learned much from observing the example of my supervising attorneys: keenly fielding appellate judges' questions at oral argument, conferring with community leaders about the progress of their class action against a landlord, or connecting with clients in emotional-trying moments. Most rewarding, however, was the time I spent directly representing low-income clients myself and making a positive difference in their lives.

In one instance, I helped a Spanish-speaking couple who had fallen behind with their bills after the husband was afflicted with a life-threatening and severely disabling medical condition. When a debt-collection action was brought against him, I was able to identify potential legal defects in the evidence that helped to leverage a favorable settlement. It was immensely gratifying to hear the clients' great relief and know that I was able to help them at such a difficult point in their lives. Later this summer, another client—a single mother of four—was forced to leave a precarious housing situation due to threats of violence and subsequently faced an emergency housing situation. I was able to successfully negotiate a settlement with her landlord that enabled her and her family to afford a quick move-in to better and safer housing.

As much as my summer's hands-on learning experiences have helped develop my lawyering skills, it was moments like these that reminded me what drove me towards becoming a lawyer in the first place. It has been an honor to spend my summer with such an outstanding group of lawyers and support staff—so dedicated to committing their talents towards helping the needy. My time with them has strongly strengthened my commitment to pursue a career in public interest litigation. Thank you for your work and for granting me this invaluable opportunity.

Sincerely,



Austin Webbert
University of Michigan Law School
J.D. Candidate, 2017

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
LAW SCHOOL
CLINICAL LAW PROGRAMS

363 Legal Research Building
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1215
(734) 763-4319 Fax: (734) 764-4702
mclp@umich.edu

CIVIL LITIGATION CLINIC

CRIMINAL DEFENSE CLINIC

October 6, 2016

Dan Ruben, Director
Equal Justice America
c/o Katie Toman:
katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

Re: Austin Webbert

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Austin Webbert had an EJA fellowship this past summer to work as an intern in the Law School's Civil-Criminal Litigation Clinic. He recently reminded me that one of my duties as the clinic director is to issue a short report to you about him – a duty I had conveniently forgotten.

I am happy to report that Austin did excellent work as one of two interns in the program over the summer. He got what I think was a fairly rich and varied lawyering experience – clinic cases tend to range from very simple cases in the local state district courts to very complex cases in the federal appellate courts. Austin worked on a number of matters, some of which I directly supervised. The cases included:

- settlement of water overcharges in a landlord-tenant case;
- settlement and monitoring of a credit card debt collection case;
- research surveying ex post facto attacks on state and federal sex offender laws;
- litigation and settlement of an eviction for nonpayment of rent;
- a youthful offender sentencing;
- communication and a final report to a class of 130 plaintiffs in a prisoners' rights case;
- FOIA requests regarding segregation of mentally ill prisoners in Michigan state prisons;
- monitoring prosecution filings to re-sentence juvenile lifers under the *Montgomery* case;
- representing senior citizens challenging a mid-lease rent increase and excessive late fees;
- reviewing and responding to prisoners' letters regarding their grievances and appeals; and
- follow-up work on an asylum application.

Austin was personable and easy to work with, and we thoroughly enjoyed having him in the office. He was sharp, diligent, thoughtful, hard-working, and a good colleague; we hope to see him again as a clinical law student. Although he did not get in to court as much as some summer interns do, he performed many lawyering tasks – pleadings, research memos, client contact, even tenant organizing – and provided just the kind of help we look for in our summer law student interns. Please feel free to contact me if you need more information, and our thanks to EJA for helping us to fund these summer jobs. Best wishes, and

Yours truly,



Paul D. Reingold
Director