

August 3, 2017

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Working with the University of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Clinic this summer was an amazing experience. I was able to help a wide variety of indigent clients that were in great need of financial relief. It was a rewarding eleven weeks that will shape and impact me as I decide what kind of legal career to pursue going forward.

Most of my time was spent preparing for, and representing clients at, administrative hearings. Many of my clients had multiple issues that needed to be addressed in order for them to obtain their unemployment insurance benefits. One of my clients had a huge fraud case against her, even though she insisted on never lying or intentionally misrepresenting anything to the Agency. After a series of hearings, we finally won her exoneration, only to have trouble with the Agency actually returning the money they wrongfully withheld from her taxes. This was an extremely tedious and frustrating process for the client, but she said it would have been impossible if she had been forced to go through it alone. When she finally received a check from the Agency, she called me crying because she was so grateful for everything the clinic had done for her, and she was thrilled to finally be able to take her kids on the Florida trip she had been promising for years. Another client that I had was extremely ill. He was too sick to properly and timely deal with the issues in his case. This created a procedural roadblock to getting the benefits he rightly deserved, and getting that money was another great worry on top all of his other health concerns. We had to present some complicated legal arguments in order to have his case heard on the merits—something the client would not have been able to do on his own. Serving as his advocate was especially gratifying in that I was able to alleviate a great burden and allow him to focus on his health.

In addition to balancing several clients and conducting weekly hearings, I worked on a research memo and two appellate briefs. In response to a recent Detroit Free Press article, I researched impartiality and due process concerns stemming from threatening communication between the Unemployment Insurance Agency and the Administrative Hearing System. I also drafted two circuit court appeal briefs in an effort to win back thousands of dollars in unemployment insurance benefits that were withheld from each client.

It was very rewarding providing assistance in an area where the average person is not able to fully and completely help themselves. The Unemployment Insurance System is daunting and difficult to maneuver, and many of my clients had worked themselves into a load of debt just by not knowing how to successfully navigate the Agency's appeal process. It was gratifying to be able to provide relief and peace of mind to at least a few claimants, and having those clients be from my home state made the experience all the more fulfilling. While I am unsure of the path my legal career will take going forward, I hope to continue utilizing my legal education to serve my community in whatever way I can.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline E. Paetzold
University of Michigan Law School
Class of 2019