

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I spent my summer as an Equal Justice America Fellow with the Community and Economic Development Clinic at the University of Michigan. The Community and Economic Development Clinic has a transactional focus and works mainly with not for profits and community organizations in the city of Detroit. My work this summer primarily revolved around two non-profits in the city.

The first organization is one from Detroit's Southwest side that seeks to mold youth by encouraging their creativity and giving them access to space to construct art as well as training and mentorship from professional street artists. Moreover, the project brings together youth, adult artists and local home and business owners to beautify the neighborhood. Community members allow youth to install murals on various houses, garages and businesses; in so doing they created a sort of walking gallery that honors the cultural diversity of Southwest Detroit. Overall, the group works hard to provide a safe and inspirational space for youth to grow and make a positive impact on their community.

The bulk of my summer's work with that project had to do with making sure that this group could continue to do its work in a way that was safe and legal. To this end, I focused on creating brochures that would inform, artists, homeowners and business owners of how to commission street art, interact with police and avoid tickets and fines for their work.

The second client was an Urban Farm dedicated to providing healthy food in a community where much of the available food is fast food and junk food. The farm goes to great efforts to involve community members not only in buying and eating their food, but also in growing food at the farm, learning about agriculture and about healthy living. The farm is also looking to expand and create a cooperative grocery store in the City of Detroit that will provide healthy food and classes on healthy living for locals who lack a local grocery store.

For this project, much of my work involved real estate matters, working on a new market tax credit deal to create a commercial grocery store development, and working with the city government to make sure the farm stayed in compliance with various city ordinances.

Though the organizations have totally different focuses, they are both zealous in their commitment to bettering Detroit, a cause and a city that are both near to my heart. I came to law school in large part to make a positive impact on the city, and so working with these groups has been extremely worthwhile for me and a great experience overall.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to do substantive and meaningful work this summer, without your help my summer experience would not have been possible.

Sincerely,

James Fisher  
University of Michigan Law School  
Graduating December 2017



September 9, 2016

Mr. Dan Ruben  
Equal Justice America

Re: James Fisher

Dear Mr. Reuben:

James (“Carter”) Fisher was awarded an Equal Justice America fellowship to work in the Community and Economic Development Clinic at the University of Michigan Law School this past summer. I write to report on Carter’s experience in the Clinic as an EJA fellow.

The Clinic represents community organizations and small businesses in Detroit on transactional matters. Carter was a student in the Clinic in the spring 2016 semester. He was familiar with the Clinic’s procedures and as a result lost no time in getting immersed in the various Clinic cases. This summer, Carter was able to work with two different supervisors. He was able to see our different styles of lawyering (and supervising). The summer students in the Clinic get much wider exposure to a diverse group of clients and legal issues than the students who take the course. During his time in the Clinic, Carter got to work with two different clients on two diverse projects. Carter was able to broaden his experience and explore different clients and different areas of law during the summer. Neither of the files Carter had handled during his semester in the Clinic was active during the summer so Carter had the opportunity to work with other clients on other types of legal issues. Carter worked with clients involved in urban agriculture, art, and solar power.

Carter was able to work on a complex real estate project, reviewing the proposed agreement between the parties who will co-develop the building, and counseling our client regarding the terms of the agreement. He researched the New Markets Tax Credit. He also researched city regulations regarding business signage and began counseling a client on the requirements. Carter researched drafted a letter to the proposed federal changes to overtime laws and wrote a letter informing current and former Clinic clients of the changes. He worked on negotiations regarding a license agreement and an agreement regarding liability.

Finally, Carter helped introduce a new supervisor to resources in Detroit for small businesses by writing a memo outlining the organizations the new supervisor should contact.

Carter did excellent work in the Clinic this summer. He took the work very seriously and worked hard to provide excellent legal representation to the clients.

Let me know if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

Alicia Alvarez  
Director/Clinical Professor of Law