

August 31, 2015

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II – Suite 2014
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I would like to thank Equal Justice America for the generous fellowship it provided to me this past summer. The fellowship supported my internship with the Employment Unit at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia. I worked on a variety of cases this summer but focused primarily on wage claims and barriers to employment due to criminal record history. My internship experience was rewarding and cemented my desire to pursue a public interest career.

One of the most memorable cases I worked on involved a client who was a victim of wage theft. She worked at a call center outside of Philadelphia selling insurance plans. My client was supposed to receive a commission for each person who successfully enrolled in a plan that she had sold. However, after my client left her job, her employer refused to pay her all of the commissions that she had rightfully earned. By the time that she came to CLS for assistance, her financial situation was dire. Recouping her lost wages would make an immediate difference in her life. After conducting multiple interviews with the client, I drafted a demand letter to the employer seeking payment of the unpaid wages along with liquidated damages. After receiving the letter, the employer was willing to negotiate. I negotiated with the employer and worked with my supervisor to draft a settlement agreement. Although my client did not ultimately receive all that she believed that she was owed, she was incredibly grateful for CLS' assistance. It was wonderful to know that I had helped make a tangible difference in my client's life.

Another highlight of my summer involved a client who was the victim of employment discrimination due to her criminal record. After being hired to provide care for people with disabilities, my client was fired after completing her orientation. My client had been arrested but had never been convicted of a crime. Her employer had taken her arrest into consideration in violation of Pennsylvania law. After I wrote a demand letter to the employer, my client was reinstated to her former position. As a result, my client was able to regain much needed stability in her life.

At CLS, I had the opportunity to work with passionate advocates who provided valuable support and advice. Throughout the summer, my supervisors showed me what it takes to be an effective advocate for clients and also taught me a great deal about substantive law. They also provided opportunities to engage in community outreach and to learn about broader advocacy. CLS is unique among civil legal services providers for engaging in extensive policy advocacy along with providing direct services. I had the chance to do research that directly contributed to one of CLS' legislative efforts. Knowing that I helped be part of an effort to enact broad change was something I valued.

I am grateful for my summer internship at Community Legal Services. I greatly enjoyed working directly with clients to make a tangible difference in their lives and learning from seasoned attorneys. I thank Equal Justice America for its support.

Sincerely,

Peter Kye
University of Virginia School of Law
Class of 2016