

December 27, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Last summer, I worked as a law clerk for a public interest organization, the National Senior Citizens Law Center, where I had the opportunity to advocate for the income and housing rights of older Americans. I was able to be a part of the wonderful work NSCLC does for the elderly community because of Equal Justice America's generous contribution.

As a law clerk at NSCLC, I gained hands-on experience in a vast array of projects and I received excellent one-on-one mentorship from prominent elder law attorneys. I conducted research and drafted legal memoranda pertaining to real cases and causes. I had the opportunity to write several articles for publication in NSCLC's *Washington Report*, a nationally circulated, electronic newsletter. I was also involved in a consumer-outreach project that allowed me to speak to people from all over the country about their real-life experiences in assisted living facilities.

I was particularly moved by a project that enabled me to speak with family members of individuals who had been or were in the process of being evicted from assisted living facilities. Despite a federal mandate that Medicaid-certified facilities accept Medicaid reimbursement as payment, assisted living facilities sometimes discriminate against Medicaid-eligible residents. Eviction can have a serious impact on the psychological and physical wellbeing of older persons, as demonstrated by the sad reality that some particularly frail individuals simply cannot survive the transition. Speaking with families that were struggling to protect their loved-ones from this injustice was an experience I will never forget.

I was also impressed with NSCLC's endeavor to protect the income and housing rights of Medicaid beneficiaries through a consumer-outreach program designed to curb "double-billing" in Medicaid-certified facilities. In order to participate in the Medicaid program, providers must follow specific federal rules. One rule requires providers to accept Medicaid payment as payment

in full. This rule serves as an important protection for financially needy patients because it prevents providers from overcharging for medically necessary care. Unfortunately, some Medicaid facilities collect Medicaid reimbursement from the government, and then—in contravention of federal regulations—bill the patient or the patient’s family for additional charges. I was pleased to assist NSCLC in its effort to end this illegal practice.

Equal Justice America’s support allowed me to devote my time to tremendously important causes, and the experience as a whole was deeply rewarding. My Equal Justice America Fellowship experience has invigorated my passion for public interest work, and I am truly grateful for having had this wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely,

Whitney Chelgren

Loyola Law School, 2012