

July 24, 2012

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

First, I would like to sincerely thank you and Equal Justice America for providing me with a fellowship this summer. Without EJA, it would have been a much more difficult decision to commit to working at a non-profit and serving deserving, low- income clients this summer. I am writing to briefly tell you about my experience.

This summer I worked at the Philadelphia Unemployment Project, which is partnered with Penn Law's Employment Advocacy Project. I was responsible for answering general and specific questions callers or walk-in clients may have had regarding all facets of unemployment compensation benefits in Pennsylvania. I was also able to do substantive work with clients who were appealing adverse decisions regarding their eligibility for unemployment compensation benefits, including representing them at employment compensation appeal hearings.

I was shocked by how much autonomy I had and how much I was able to do this summer. For the clients I represented, I did all the work that a practicing attorney would have done, including doing initial and follow up interviews with clients, developing individualized strategy for hearings, and physically representing the clients at appeal hearings. This was fascinating work, and each client's case was unique; some were straight-forward and some were complex cases, in which issues turned on minute details. I am also pretty confident I had a more substantial summer work experience than many of my peers who may have worked at law firms this summer. Like them, I was able to hone my research and writing skills, but I was also able to direct testimony, cross-examine witnesses, introduce evidence, make objections, and make closing statements all in a formal legal setting.

With the economy barely recovering from the Great Recession, a lot of my clients were struggling middle class people who were temporarily just down on their luck and unable to find steady and/or desirable employment. It was a great feeling to know that I was able to make some people's lives easier by helping them navigate the minefield that is unemployment compensation.

Again, without EJA, I am not sure that I would have had such a fantastic experience. I am so grateful that such an organization exists to ensure that low income individuals can receive the quality legal assistance that they so very much deserve. My experience this summer has made me more committed than ever to doing substantial pro bono work, and I have EJA to thank for that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Xavier Watson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "X" and "W".

Xavier Watson
Penn Law '14