

July 29, 2017

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to you in regards to my Equal Justice America Fellowship in the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law Housing and Consumer Law Clinic. This fellowship has been challenging but rewarding. Considering the housing crisis that is happening in the District, there are many residents that need our help in securing their housing. During my fellowship I have worked with many clients who are facing discrimination under the Fair Housing Act and the D.C. Human Rights Act. Their cases range from familial discrimination to disability discrimination. I also have several clients that live at Brookland Manor off of Rhode Island Avenue. Brookland Manor has been a subsidized housing community in the District since the mid-1900's and the residents are now facing displacement as their community goes through a huge redevelopment. In addition to displacement, our clients are facing disability discrimination from the management who have ignored their requests for accommodation or modifications under the Fair Housing Act. One of these clients is an elderly Korean war Veteran who had frostbite in his feet during the war and has had a multitude of ailments in the past few years leaving him unable to walk without forearm crutches. He had asked management to be moved to a first-floor unit several years ago but they only offered to let him keep his scooter in the entryway of his building, leaving him unable to use it since there are several small flights of stairs to get to the sidewalk outside. Thankfully, we were able to write another letter on his behalf and have been negotiating with management and they are likely to move him to a ground-floor unit in the near future, which will dramatically improve his quality of life.

We have also been working with members on the Brookland Manor Tenants Association on their claim that management and private security have been violating their Right to Organize under D.C. law. The tenants' association along with members of ONE D.C. have been making efforts to inform the residents of Brookland Manor about the redevelopment plan and to educate them on their rights. In an effort to get residents out, management has hired special police to walk around the property and they have been harassing tenants and organizers that are flyer-ing or knocking on doors trying to talk to other residents. This is in direct violation of D.C.'s Tenants' Right to Organize law. Our clinic has met with these tenants and heard many times how they've lived on the property for many years and never had any problem until the redevelopment. Now, they're living in a hostile environment where they are harassed for advocating for themselves and live in fear of being evicted for these efforts. We hope to file this case soon in an effort to help these tenants and bring light to the crisis that gentrification and redevelopment has put native D.C. residents in. Brookland Manor is one of the places in the District that has 4- and 5-bedroom apartments big enough for families. After the redevelopment, there will only be primarily 1- and 2-bedroom apartments which means families will be split up and will most

likely have to move to Maryland where the housing prices are not as astronomical. This displacement of lifelong D.C. residents and replacing them with young working singles is an increasing problem in the District. Our clinic continues to work with other firms in D.C. to help those effected by this as much as we can.

Overall, this fellowship has been a very rewarding experience. I have gotten to know our clients well and I feel that they truly appreciate our effort at the clinic. Although this area of law can be challenging and there are many roadblocks from powerful landlords and developers, I do believe that the efforts of the UDC-Housing and Consumer Law Clinic, as well as other non-profits and firms in D.C., are really making a difference for D.C. residents. My hope is that as I continue in the area of public interest law that the work we do will eventually change society for the better.

Rebecca Krassel

J.D. Candidate, 2018

University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law