August 3, 2018

Emma Ruben
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
emma@equaljusticeamerica.org

## Dear Ms. Ruben:

I would like to thank Equal Justice America for supporting my work this summer at Greater Boston Legal Services. I was fortunate to be placed in the Housing Unit, where I worked with Attorney Walker on eviction defense cases and emergency assistance shelter access. The work I preformed over the last four weeks was at times challenging, but further emphasized the importance of legal services work and funding.

For the first half of my internship I was focused on eviction defense work in non-payment cases. This involved working with clients to file answers and discovery request with the court, finding funding to pay off what is owed, and negotiating with landlords and their attorneys to preserve the tenancy. In doing so I had to figure out the Massachusetts Housing Court system, which can often be confusing and overwhelming, so to better help clients navigate an intimidating system. Many of these individuals who cannot receive help from GBLS have to go into Housing Court representing themselves, and many do not know how to navigate the court system. To remedy this, one of the programs I participated in was the "attorney of the day table" which is at the housing court every Thursday. At this table we provided guidance to tenants facing eviction before they appeared in front of a judge or a mediator. The volume that we saw at this table demonstrated the need for more legal service attorneys and the depth of the housing crisis in the Boston area.

The second half of my internship involved work with the shelter team within the housing unit at GBLS. In this role I helped Attorney Walker as she learned about her new role helping families access emergency assistance shelter in Massachusetts. This work was heavily regulatory, and I was surprised to find the amount of barriers even eligible families face when they apply for shelter. At such a stressful time in their lives, it is helpful for many families to have the attorneys at GBLS navigate them through the rules and documentation needed to apply. This work required a good amount of client interaction. I spent much of my time contacting clients to help them get their documentation in order, collect information on their situation, and to explain the often complex shelter system. This work was trying, as you are dealing with families facing what is likely one of the lowest points of their lives, and entering shelter is never an ideal outcome for a family. However, it is a source of comfort to have the attorneys and staff at GBLS to help them make sense of the shelter system, and I was glad to be able to assist the shelter team in this important work.

My time as an intern at GBLS helped me learn new ways that attorneys can assist communities and indivduals in need, something I hope to continue both during law school and beyond.

Thank you,

Desiree Pelletier



August 24, 2018

Emma Ruben
Equal Justice America
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Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Ms. Ruben,

My name is Laticia Walker and I am an attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services in their Housing Unit. I was Desiree Pelletier's supervisor during her internship this past summer. Ms. Pelletier worked with me in my capacity as Staff Attorney for HomeStart Inc and as a Shelter Staff Attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services.

My work at HomeStart, Inc involved representing indigent client who were facing eviction due to non-payment of rent and often needed wrap around services, including representative payee and vendor payments. My work at Greater Boston Legal Services as a Shelter Attorney involved representing indigent clients who needed access to emergency shelter or transfers to different shelters to meet their needs under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Desiree was extremely helpful as an intern this summer. She contacted clients by phone and by mail and made sure they understood the documents they signed and what their rights were. Desiree was able to adequately communicate with client with various ranges of education, language barriers, and in some of the most stressful moments of the client's life. She conducted research on various court issues including abuse of discretion, state agency obligations and requirements under the ADA, and various housing court statues. Desiree never complained about any task given to her and accomplished every task with enthusiasm. Whether the task was conducting research, contacting clients for a class action lawsuit or interviewing clients to inform them of their rights, Desiree completed every task on time and with zeal.

Working with Desiree this summer was a pleasure and I highly recommend her for the EJW fellowship. It was a pleasure to work with her this summer and I would enjoy working with her again. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at <a href="Lwalker@gbla.org"><u>Lwalker@gbla.org</u></a> or 617-603-1654.

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Best-Regards,

Laticia Walker, Esq

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