

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you for providing me with an opportunity to work at Bay Area Legal Aid in Oakland, California, with clients who cope with domestic violence, chronic illness, and homelessness. As a summer law clerk with both the Economic Justice unit and Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP), I was grateful to begin providing civil legal aid under the guidance of such incredible attorneys.

I primarily worked with a young, Cambodian American mother who had an upcoming disability benefits (SSI) appeals hearing with an administrative law judge. I requested and reviewed the thousands of pages of her medical records that described a complex set of physical and mental health conditions, conducted interviews with her health care providers, consulted with her about her chronic illnesses, wrote an appeals brief, and direct examination on her behalf. I learned a great deal about the care and craft that it takes to tell someone's story, weaving together both technical and traumatic details, under a legal framework that do not reflect the nuances of someone's life.

I also had the opportunity to observe administrative hearings, learn from legal aid practice area-specific trainings, attend community partner meetings, and join my supervisor in client meetings at Santa Rita Jail.

Through BayLegal's Medical-Legal partnership with the Alameda County Community Health Center Network "Care Neighborhood" Initiative, I served fifteen clients with complex mental health needs. As a part of a care team, I worked closely with community health workers (CHWs) to conduct intake interviews, conduct legal research, and provide brief service related to housing law, family law, and public benefits appeals.

I would not have been able to have this experience with civil legal aid while balancing my family obligations if it were not for the generosity of Equal Justice America. Thank you again!

Sincerely,
Connie Cho
Harvard Law School



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August 31, 2018

Emma Ruben
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Via Electronic Mail

Re: Connie Cho, Summer 2018 EJA Fellowship

Dear Ms. Ruben:

Thank you so much for granting an Equal Justice America Summer 2018 Fellowship to Connie Cho, which enabled her to work with us at Bay Area Legal Aid's Oakland Office. She divided her time between us, working with the Alameda SSI Team and one of the Alameda Medical-Legal Partnerships.

BayLegal's SSI unit works in collaboration with Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services to provide disability rights advocacy to very low income residents of Alameda County who have high-level mental health needs. In her capacity as an SSI law clerk, Ms. Cho was required to quickly learn complex Social Security case law, regulations, and guidance. Ms. Cho independently handled a difficult case for a client who has complicated medical and mental health needs, in addition to stressors such as raising a young child as a single mother and a history of domestic violence. The client's case needed to be investigated and prepared for administrative hearing on an extremely short timeline. We gave Ms. Cho the option of taking this (more difficult) case or a more straightforward one, and she chose the more difficult case.

Ms. Cho did an excellent job interviewing the client, investigating her claim, and collecting hundreds of pages of medical records to submit in support of the claim. She familiarized herself with the details of the medically complex case to the point of being able to interview the claimant's health care provider and elicit an extremely strong, detailed letter of support from the provider. She also obtained strong supportive opinions from the client's behavioral health care providers. Ms. Cho then wrote an extensive brief for the client's hearing before a Social Security Administrative Law Judge, which

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addressed multiple complex procedural and factual issues. Ms. Cho has excellent client interaction skills, is a critical thinker, is adept at learning difficult law, and is a competent writer who worked gracefully under a stressful timeline. She bravely jumped onto a difficult case and into each interaction and task that was necessary to push the case past the finish line.

BayLegal's Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) with the Community Health Center Network in Alameda County requires us to practice in multiple substantive areas including housing, public benefits, and health access. As a MLP clerk, Ms. Cho received training in multiple substantive areas and she was eventually able to issue-spot and, with supervision, practice across multiple areas.

A key feature of our MLP is receiving referrals from our partner Health Centers for their patients to get legal information and assistance. Ms. Cho was responsible for reviewing the referrals, making the initial calls to the referred patients, and screening them for eligibility for BayLegal's free services which included gathering information about the patient/potential client's specific need. After gathering the necessary information, we worked together to come up with and implementing an action plan for the patient/potential client, which often involved advice, brief service (such as writing advocacy letters and helping with legal forms), researching other community resources, referral, and communicating with community partners.

Throughout her time with us this summer, Ms. Cho demonstrated patience, compassion, flexibility, and a high-level of professionalism. She worked well independently and she was careful in her preparations in that she asked detailed and thoughtful questions to ensure she fully understood what was being asked of her.

We are very pleased with Ms. Cho's work with us this summer, and we know that our clients were also pleased and grateful for her help.

Please let us know if you have any additional questions.

Best regards,

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