



Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



Name: Tyler Creighton

Law School: Boston University

Fellowship: Greater Boston Legal Services -- Housing Unit

Entry 1: June 11, 2019

I was selected as an Equal Justice America Fellow and am now two weeks into my internship in the Housing Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services.

Given that Boston is the third most expensive rental market in the U.S. and some 40 Massachusetts renters are forcibly removed from their homes every day, GBLS' work to represent low-income residents facing eviction and to preserve and expand affordable housing is absolutely vital.

Already I've had the opportunity to assist a client whose landlord is trying to force him out by doubling his rent despite refusing to do basic maintenance and repairs. I've also been working with tenants associations that represent thousands of tenants as developers seek to demolish public housing and redevelop mixed-income communities.

Unlike for-profit law firms, GBLS can't afford to pay summer interns. That is why the generous support I am receiving as an Equal Justice America Fellow is so important. Without EJA, law students interested in public interest work would have to go into even more debt to gain valuable experience in their field or forgo their public interest commitments.

Entry 2: July 10, 2019

Last month I mentioned a client whose landlord was trying to force him out (after more than 20 years) by nearly doubling his rent despite refusing to do basic maintenance and repairs.



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I'm pleased to report that after a 5-hr mediation yesterday we were able to secure a long-term lease for this client. His rent will go up (though not nearly as high as the landlord demanded) but he gets major renovations and repairs in his unit.

The landlord pushed hard to include language in the lease to curtail our client's right to organize other tenants. It was inspiring to see our client speak forcefully on why that language was unacceptable. He rightfully pointed out that he and the other tenants wouldn't have felt the need to organize together if the landlord had maintained good conditions in the building. In the end we ensured organizing protections in the lease.

It's hard to imagine this result without the steadfast advocacy of attorneys at Greater Boston Legal Services for the last 2+ yrs on this case and others in the same building. Please donate to Equal Justice America so that my advocacy for low-income tenants suffering the consequences of the housing affordability crisis, and the advocacy of my peers, may continue.

Entry 3: 7/29/19

In the last few weeks of my Equal Justice America Fellowship, I've stepped back from day-to-day direct service to focus on policy questions with potentially huge consequences for the future construction of affordable housing.

Competitive bidding laws for public construction were established to root out cronyism in government contracts and ensure taxpayers receive quality service at the cheapest price. But as governments turn to public-private partnerships to provide public goods like affordable housing, questions emerge about whether the bidding laws apply. On the one hand, profit incentives seem to alleviate the concerns of corruption and waste that the bidding laws are intended to address and application of the law could deter future builders of affordable housing. On the other hand, we don't want to make public-private partnerships a vehicle for evading the bidding laws for truly public projects.

It's critical to have a voice like Greater Boston Legal Services, with extensive experience in housing and employment law and an eye to the public interest, in these esoteric but impactful policy discussions. Please donate to EJA so that the next generation of public interest lawyers is prepared to tackle these difficult policy issues.

Entry 4: 8/8/2019

As you may know, I was selected as an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer to work as an intern in the Housing Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services, an organization that has provided pro bono legal services to low-income residents in the region for nearly 125 years.



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Given that Boston is the fourth most expensive rental market in the U.S. and some 40 Massachusetts renters are evicted every day, GBLS' work to represent low-income residents facing eviction and to preserve and expand affordable housing is absolutely vital.

This summer I assisted a client whose landlord tried to force him out of an apartment he has called home for more than 20 years by doubling his rent despite refusing to do basic maintenance and repairs throughout the last two decades. After raising several credible defenses and counterclaims, we were able to negotiate a new long-term lease with the landlord which increased rent at a reasonable rate in return for major updates and repairs in the apartment.

I've also worked closely with several public housing tenants associations in negotiations with private developers and city officials around demolishing public housing buildings currently in disrepair and redeveloping new mixed-income communities in their place. With GBLS' help the tenants associations have secured a seat at the table to influence redevelopment plans and ensure thousands of current residents will enjoy relocation assistance during construction and rights to rehousing when the new development is complete.

It's hard to imagine either one of these results without the steadfast advocacy of attorneys, staff, and interns at GBLS.

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In order to support the next generation of public interest lawyers, please consider donating to EJA so there will be more funds for future classes of fellows around the country.