

Bill Green
Notre Dame Law School Class of 2019

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben:

I write to express my sincere gratitude for being named an Equal Justice America Fellow this past summer in Chicago. It enabled me to work at the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing, a non-profit which defends at-risk Chicagoans in eviction court.

Entering the internship, I knew very little about housing law but was quickly given clients whose cases I would handle in full. As a student interested in litigation, this is why I wanted to work for LCBH in the first place. The staff attorneys engrossed us in the law and gave us ample opportunities to take on cases – an opportunity not many of my fellows students at Notre Dame got this summer – and to engage in policy advocacy, an interest from my prior work experience.

There are two cases which stand out from my eight weeks at LCBH. The first involved a veteran who had lived in his apartment for over two decades. His apartment complex was foreclosed upon, and the new landlord, a bank, was attempting to evict him. This is normal in Chicago. My client accepted this reality but needed more time. That was typical of our clients. Under supervision of one of the staff attorneys, we entered into a strategy by which we could delay our client's eviction by two months using procedural mechanisms while simultaneously negotiating a move-out payment from the bank to our client under a Chicago municipal ordinance. That ordinance, the Keep Chicago Renting Ordinance, was recently enacted after years of advocacy by LCBH. It allows renters in foreclosed properties a right to either a lease renewal with their new landlord after foreclosure of their building or to get a move-out payment from that landlord. Our delay tactics worked, avoiding a final eviction ruling and allowing our client to find a new place to live. A few days after my internship ended, my supervising attorney let me know that our client had also received a move-out payment for his trouble. A real, palpable positive result for someone in a bad situation.

The second case involved a woman whose landlord decided that, without cause, decided to evict the client. I drafted a cease-and-desist letter to counter the faulty 30-day notice he issued to the client, buying her an extra month of time. Within that time-frame, we negotiated an amenable move-out date with the landlord in response to subsequent 30-day and 5-day notices while positioning the client to take an affirmative case up to recover the security deposit the landlord was refusing to give back. The client was pleased and felt empowered in our work together because she "knows that most of the time people in [her] situation can't do anything to fight back." Knowing that I was serving as someone's shield against an unfair landlord and putting them in a stable living situation felt like a great use of the law.

Finally, I got to use my policy experience to help work on a new data initiative LCBH was entering. Since Michael Desmond's Pulitzer Prize-Winning *Evicted*, it had become clear that data on evictions is sparse, at best. With LCBH's data manager, I drafted FOIA requests and crunched eviction data in order to draft talking points which were eventually used to form a partnership with a large New York law firm to build capacity for further research into eviction actions taken in Chicago, as well as timelines and results of those actions. Similar work in New York led to mandated defense counsel becoming state law, so working at the ground floor on the project was very exciting.