



BAY AREA LEGAL AID

WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE

Alex R. Gulotta
Executive Director

August 11, 2017

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

BY EMAIL to katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

Re: 2017 Summer Grant Recipient- James Cheney

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Mr. James Cheney's summer internship with Bay Area Legal Aid provided an opportunity for the fellow to utilize many critical legal skills such as research and writing, client intake and community outreach and education. Mr. Cheney worked in our Economic Justice Unit which focuses on providing advocacy to move families and individuals into self-sufficiency by ensuring access to public benefit programs and services and removing legal barriers to employment. We provide direct advocacy to low-income individuals and engage in systemic advocacy to ensure long lasting change.

From day one, Mr. Cheney dived into all areas of our advocacy. He was supervised by three staff attorneys and two advocates. He demonstrated considerable skill in handling a heavy workload and managing the expectations of his supervisors. During his internship he took on work that enabled our office to increase the services provided to clients. He performed fact gathering and analysis by interviewing clients and reviewing evidence. He researched and wrote memorandum on various issues impacting our clients. Within a few weeks, we became confident that he could handle representing clients under supervision and by the end of the summer he represented two clients in administrative hearings and a number of negotiations with opposing parties. This included interviewing clients, drafting declarations, and writing a legal brief. At the hearings, he questioned witnesses (both adverse and favorable), answered questions from the administrative law judge, and made oral legal arguments. His clients liked working with him and were very happy with the advocacy he provided.

Mr. Cheney also gave testimony in Sacramento to the Human Services Committee of the California State Legislature on proposed legislation. This required him to analyze how particular changes to the law would impact his clients. He took this very seriously and was able to foresee how changes to the law would help not only his clients, but also help the advocates who work on these issues.

In short, Mr. Cheney was a tremendously valuable resource at our office. He has excellent communication skills. He treated clients and colleagues equally with kindness, respect and patience.

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This summer, he was a fantastic advocate for his clients and an asset to Bay Area Legal Aid. We were delighted to work with him and are certain that he will be an asset to any organization or law firm as he continues in his legal career. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 415-982-1300 or dmedearis@baylegal.org with any questions.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Donald H. Medearis".

Donald H. Medearis
Staff Attorney / Economic Justice Unit
Legal Barriers to Employment Project Coordinator