

August 31, 2017

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II – Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I worked as a Civil Rights intern at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Charlottesville, Virginia. It was an incredible experience that allowed me to work with individual clients and on a national research project that can be used by organizations across the entire country. It has been great to give back to the local community which welcomed me with open arms when I started law school one year ago.

One of the largest projects that I worked on involved fact checking and pulling exhibits for a contempt brief we were working on involving a women's correctional facility. The facility is meant to be a medical facility for female inmates from across the state of Virginia, but it was alleged that the prison was not meeting the needs of those inmates. The Legal Aid Justice Center entered into a settlement with the facility in 2015, but since that time the lawyers have continued talking with the inmates and have found that there are still issues with the way they are being treated.

I was in charge of the declarations of ten different women throughout the summer. This meant that I had to fact check every line of their declarations while also pulling exhibits to be used at trial. Seeing what these women were having to endure was heartbreaking and reassured me that every client deserves a lawyer that is going to fight for them.

The experience that will stick with me the most from this project came when an attorney and I interviewed three of the clients inside the prison. We talked to them to try to evaluate their credibility as witnesses and to hear what had been happening throughout the facility. The gratitude they showed me was incredible and showed me that I was having a real impact on their lives. Being able to sit just a few feet away from the clients and hearing their stories was a life-changing experience, and I hope to continue that kind of face-to-face interaction throughout my career.

The other project that I think will have a long-lasting impact involved researching the laws in each state regarding driver's license suspensions for unpaid court costs and fines. This is a major issue in Virginia and has led to hundreds of thousands of licenses being suspended in recent

years. The research I did alongside the other Civil Rights interns will show whether states do or do not suspend for these unpaid fees and what factors are considered in setting up alternative options like payment plans. The research will be published by the Legal Aid Justice Center as a guide to show which states have systems that can be used as leading examples for states looking to reform their laws (like Virginia).

I feel so lucky to have had this experience working directly with open and honest clients and brilliant lawyers in the Charlottesville community. I look forward to continuing to do pro bono work within whatever community my career takes me to, and I will always remember the lessons I've learned and clients I've advocated for during my time at the Legal Aid Justice Center.

Thank you for helping to fund my work. Having that money allowed me to focus on the clients' needs rather than on finding the money to pay rent. This summer would not have been nearly the same without your fellowship.

Sincerely,

Steven Weiser
University of Virginia School of Law
JD Expected May 2019

October 26, 2017

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

Re: Recommendation for Steven Weiser

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I write to evaluate Steven Weiser's work for the Legal Aid Justice Center this summer, made possible through his Equal Justice America fellowship. I oversaw Steven's work on enforcement of the *Scott v. Clarke* Settlement Agreement, a federal class action settlement seeking to ensure constitutionally adequate health care for prisoners at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women.

Steven worked diligently and produced timely, useful work product. His close attention to detail was especially valuable, as his work often involved examining complex medical records and comparing them against both clients' testimony and the Department of Corrections' representations. He kept detailed and well-organized notes, which I continue to reference regularly. Over the summer, I came to rely with confidence on Steven's careful review and analysis of these documents.

Steven also went out of his way to identify potentially useful information for the case and alert the *Scott* team. For example, his research uncovered an extremely useful 50-state survey of prison medical co-pay policies, which has helped to shape and support our position on that issue in the Settlement Agreement. In addition, Steven showed patience and sensitivity when interacting with our prisoner clients – a skill that is not taught in law school but is vital to public interest work.

It was a pleasure to work with Steven this summer. He never turned down an opportunity to work on an assignment, and I was sad to see him go at the end of the summer. If you have any further questions about Steven's work for LAJC, or if I can assist further in any way, please feel free to contact me.

Best,

Shannon Ellis