

# GEORGE WARD

September 16, 2022

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

Dear Dan,

Thank you for supporting my summer internship with New Hampshire Legal Assistance (NHLA). I was thrilled to join NHLA this past summer because I aspired to dismantle economic injustices and was eager to advocate for indigent clients. Interning within NHLA's housing and public benefits teams was a formative step towards this work in my legal aid career.

Working at NHLA provided an opportunity to address economic injustice. Safe, affordable, and stable housing is far from guaranteed in today's market. Exacerbating the housing crisis and others, New Hampshire generates some of the lowest per capita tax revenues in the country. The state's small government approach results in surprising gaps in the provision of critical, basic services and other support for vulnerable communities. This sparser social safety net catches fewer people, thus heightening the significance of legal aid for low-income individuals, especially those with insecure housing or reliant upon public benefits.

As a summer law clerk, I served over a dozen indigent clients facing eviction or public benefits matters. At NHLA, I learned to contextualize a client's situation within their lived experience. Many clients struggled with mental health challenges, medical issues, or marginalization. I saw that acknowledging these realities enabled a more holistic connection with clients and strengthened case strategy—for example, by countering an eviction with a reasonable accommodation request. Meaningfully serving clients often requires engaging much more than what lies within the four corners of a casefile.

At NHLA, I also strengthened my legal research and writing skills. For a NHLA client facing eviction for fraud, I researched caselaw, statutes, and administrative rules to exhaustively detail the process due, identify defects in the landlord's complaint, and ultimately prepare a successful brief for dismissal. Through similar assignments, I learned to efficiently tailor the style and substance of my work product to enable strategic case decisions.

Beyond my client work, I appreciated NHLA's uniqueness as an organization that also pursues legislative advocacy. Many legal aid organizations typically only perform direct legal services due to grant restrictions. NHLA's additional capacity to help design law is critical in New Hampshire, where the state legislature is virtually unpaid and thus is uniquely unrepresentative of low-income communities. It was exhilarating to participate in NHLA's legislative brainstorming sessions addressing the system-level drivers of individual cases—for example, discussing policy solutions to the wave of renovation-based evictions.

I learned my most important lesson at NHLA when I phoned an eviction client to say that NHLA was taking their case. They cried. For years, they felt that nobody had stood in their corner while they suffered exceptionally challenging medical problems, persistent harassment from a neighbor, and now eviction by their landlord. While I caveated that we could not guarantee an outcome for their case, the client expressed deep relief in simply knowing that someone stood alongside them. In this case and others, I saw that accompaniment might not resolve a legal issue, but it might help a person navigate a difficult time in their life.

I am grateful to Equal Justice America for making this experience possible. I am excited and resolved to continue the work.

Sincerely,  
George Ward  
Boston College Law School