



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:

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Update 1: I have some exciting news to share. Today concludes my first week as a legal intern with Greater Boston Legal Services!

As some of you may know, I was recently awarded an Equal Justice America fellowship. With the support of a grant from EJA, I am working with GBLS attorneys in their Cambridge office to provide free civil legal services to low-income individuals and families in the greater Boston area.

GBLS attorneys can make an incredible difference in the lives of others, as they help people gain access to some of the most basic necessities of life. One of these basic necessities is housing. My work this summer will mostly revolve around providing support to attorneys helping clients who are facing eviction. For example, I did statutory research on my first day which proved that a family was eligible for a specific exemption that enabled them to get emergency housing assistance from the state.

I am very thankful to be spending my summer working with an amazing team of lawyers to help people in need in a city that I deeply care for!

Update 2: Over the past few weeks at Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), I have helped the attorneys in my office prevent several potential evictions. The growing number of evictions here in Boston and across the country is alarming and in large part the result of a decline in the availability of affordable rental housing. To raise awareness, I thought I would dedicate my second EJA Fellow Update to discussing this problem.

While many experts recommend spending no more than 30 percent of your monthly income on rent, tenants in some cities across the country devote a much higher percentage on average. This is not the result of poor decision making but often out of necessity, especially as rent continues to grow at a faster pace than wages. For many reasons, people who could afford their home a few years ago suddenly cannot.

For those that cannot afford rent, there are some government programs available to help, but the funding is limited and difficult to access. In addition, despite the persistent efforts of GBLS attorneys and other legal clinics across the country, most tenants facing eviction cannot afford an attorney and go without representation. The services GBLS provides are not the norm! Indeed, in most states (including Massachusetts) tenants do not have the right to an attorney in housing court and are left to fight on their own in a complex legal proceeding against a landlord who, more often than not, has an attorney.



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The overall trend is clear: rent has become increasingly unaffordable, and the current system is unfairly stacked against tenants. We as a country can do better!

If you want to learn more, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver recently dedicated an entire segment of their show to this subject. You can watch it here: <https://lnkd.in/gKSWivRb>

Update 3: I am more than halfway through my internship with Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), so it's time for my third EJA Fellow Update.

For those of you who don't know, I am currently working in the Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services office of GBLS and have been selected to be one of this year's Equal Justice America fellows. Over the past few weeks, I have handled client intakes, completed legal research for my supervising attorney, and participated in many meetings and some court proceedings with other attorneys and judges.

I am very thankful to be working with an amazing team of lawyers to help people in need in a city that I love. For Boston!

Update 4: Time for another EJA Fellow Update!

This is my 2nd to last week at Greater Boston Legal Services and I am so grateful to Equal Justice America for providing me with funding so that I could afford to spend this summer providing civil legal aid to low-income individuals and families throughout Boston!

I've been so fortunate to work with amazing attorneys who work day in and day out to provide low-income members of our community with outstanding legal services at no cost. I have learned a lot about the affordable housing crisis in greater Boston and the specifics of summary process proceedings in Massachusetts. However, I have also learned more generally what it is like to be a lawyer responsible for helping other people; whether it's explaining a legal process or statute to a client unfamiliar with the system, negotiating with an attorney on the opposing side, or just listening to a client who needs someone to talk to. I am grateful for all I've learned this summer and look forward to putting it into practice in the future!

Update 5: Today concludes my summer internship with Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS). Here is my final EJA Fellow Update!

While it feels like just yesterday that both the summer and this internship started, it is crazy to look back and reflect on all of the things I have done. Over the last ten weeks, I have:

- Interviewed over a dozen prospective clients
- Drafted a motion under supervision of counsel that was filed in Cambridge District Court



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- Authored a Summary Process Advocacy Guide designed to help tenants and attorneys identify procedural issues which could merit a motion to dismiss. This guide has since been shared with other legal aid organizations across Boston!
- Conducted statutory research which informed families of their options when applying for emergency housing assistance
- Researched a number of legal issues which helped attorneys at my unit give the best advice and representation possible to their clients.

On a more fun personal note, I also got to go to Court three times and acted as a juror on a mock trial run with another law firm! However, the most exciting and rewarding part of my internship was meeting the real life superheroes fighting for tenants who otherwise would not have anywhere else to turn!

GBLS attorneys can make an incredible difference in the lives of others, as they help people gain access to some of the most basic necessities of life, one of these being housing. The attorneys at my office have helped prevent several potential evictions this summer alone. The growing number of evictions here in Boston and across the country is alarming and in large part the result of a decline in the availability of affordable rental housing. But every day, GBLS attorneys put forth their best effort to change outcomes for many low-income individuals and families throughout Boston!

I am very thankful to have spent my summer working with an amazing team of attorneys to help people in need in a city that I deeply care for! I am grateful to Jessica Drew and Daniel Jacobson for mentoring me this summer and providing me with plenty of opportunities to grow and develop as a lawyer!

I am also grateful to Equal Justice America for awarding me a fellowship to help me do this work. Equal Justice America provides funding for law students taking unpaid internships at legal aid programs across the country. Funding from Equal Justice America helps organizations like GBLS take on more clients and narrow the gap in outcomes. You can help law students contribute to nonprofit work by donating to Equal Justice America.