



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



Name: Kate Brennan

Law School: UCLA School of Law

Organization: Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA)

Update 1: Excited to post my first EJA Fellow Update after wrapping up my first two weeks on the Workers' Rights Team with NLSLA. I'm infinitely grateful to Equal Justice America for their generous support as an Equal Justice Fellow. After many hours of training and onboarding, it has been great to speak with clients across Los Angeles and dive into issues including wage theft, unemployment insurance claims, and SDI.

Update 2: Excited to post my second EJA Fellow Update and cannot believe how quickly this summer is flying by. The cornerstone of the Workers' Rights Team here at NLSLA is our weekly Workers' Rights Clinic, where we assist clients across Los Angeles every Thursday. In addition to helping clients file for unemployment insurance benefits and appeal administrative decisions, I've begun researching the way California classifies independent contractors. An improper classification can have significant effects on wage and hour claims. Grateful for the support from Equal Justice America in making this work possible.

Update 3: For my third EJA Fellow Update I thought I'd share a bit about NLSLA, the organization I am clerking with this summer. NLSLA was founded in the San Fernando Valley in 1965 to widen access to justice for the poorest people across Los Angeles. Currently, NLSLA serves clients on issues ranging from healthcare and public benefits to housing and workers' rights. NLSLA operates self-help clinics in courthouses across LA, which provide legal information and assistance to people representing themselves in civil matters. I'm grateful to Equal Justice America for enabling this essential work to continue through their generous fellow program.

Update 4: I cannot believe my summer with NLSLA and Equal Justice America is almost over. A highlight of the summer has been representing workers in hearings with Administrative Law Judges across Los Angeles. I was able to help a client fight against an allegation of fraud for their unemployment insurance benefits. This was particularly meaningful because the judge found no instances of fraud and waived any money the client had to pay back. Learning how to prep and represent a client was an invaluable experience. Further, seeing how much



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

easier it is to navigate a complicated legal system like unemployment insurance benefits with a lawyer has only inspired me to want to do more to make the system more accessible.

Update 5: Writing my fifth and final EJA Fellow Update as my summer clerkship with NLSLA comes to a close. A highlight of the summer was attending NLSLA's Disaster Preparedness Conference in June. NLSLA has been leading disaster assistance in LA since the 1994 Northridge Earthquake. The conference trained California legal aid attorneys to help after natural disasters such as earthquakes, wildfires, and mudslides. This training was particularly relevant for labor lawyers given the widespread labor law violations and poor working conditions that often occur in post-disaster zones that are eager to rebuild quickly and at all costs. The ongoing climate crises and COVID crises have affected, currently affect, and will continue to affect workers for years to come. I'm grateful to NLSLA for exposing me to this important field of work. Thank you to Equal Justice America and UCLA Law for giving me the opportunity to do such important work this summer. I have learned so much and met such wonderful people along the way!

When I reflect on my experience this summer, I can see all the ways I have grown as an advocate. Sitting in my first Worker's Rights Clinic I was terrified to pick up the phone and call a client directly. Over the summer, I was able to not only help numerous clients with their issues, but I also was able to develop relationships with clients. I stopped fearing these phone calls and began to look forward to them. I know it was a privilege to be able to have the time to be able to spend so much time with each of my clients. That is unfortunately rare in the legal services sector, where attorneys have to manage massive caseloads at once. I also gained familiarity with the California Labor Code and various labor laws. What began as a dizzying set of rules slowly became a puzzle that was easier to understand and thus explain to clients. As I begin my 2L year this fall, I am equipped with so much experience and passion to continue fighting for workers.