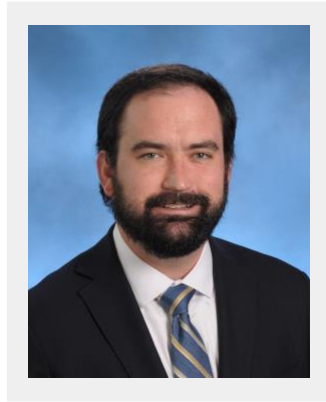




# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Eric Connolly

**Law School:** Boston University School of Law

**Organization:** Greater Boston Legal Services

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**Update 1:** #EJAFellowUpdate I am grateful for the opportunity to work this summer as a legal assistant with the BU Civil Litigation and Justice Program. For the last twenty years, Equal Justice America has been funding law students at legal aid programs in their fight on behalf of clients facing economic hardship and systemic barriers, and I am proud to have been selected as an EJA Fellow. I am looking forward to making a positive impact and increasing access to justice this summer while also improving my advocacy skills and gaining valuable litigation experience. If you would like to support EJA's mission, please consider donating to the EJA Fellows Fundraiser at <https://lnkd.in/eBxv-Mdc>. Thank you!

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**Update 2:** Last week, we reached a stipulation of dismissal on a housing case that should have been resolved two years ago. The client was so grateful when I delivered this news to her. Making such an impact in people's lives is valuable and gratifying, and I thank EJA for giving me the opportunity to do so.

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**Update 3:** This week I prepared our responses to defendant's first set of requests for production of documents. Some of the requests were overbroad and invasive of our client's privacy, and we objected to those requests. It



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was a valuable lesson that zealous advocacy requires us to always be protective of all our client's interests, even when doing so may not impact the litigation outcome.

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**Update 4:** We are trying to collect on a judgment for our client in a wage and hour case. The defendant defaulted after failing to appear or respond in any way to the litigation. We cannot levy on the execution because the name on the deed to defendant's property does not match the named defendant. We will have to amend the complaint and start from the beginning. It is frustrating, but collecting on the judgment will make an extraordinary impact in our client's life. That is powerful motivation to overcome the seemingly endless set of obstacles presented by the legal system.

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**Update 5:** I have gained a tremendous amount of substantive legal experience during my summer as a legal assistant with the B.U. Civil Litigation & Justice Program, and I am grateful for the opportunity to continue working on my cases during the Fall semester. I learned that just because you have obtained a judgment for your client does not mean the fight is over. I have received a crash course in small claims procedures; during the Fall I hope to see an amended complaint through to a favorable judgment, only this time against a named party on whose property we can levy an execution.

I learned the unfortunate lesson that sometimes we can try everything to get a positive result for our clients and still experience disappointment. It is difficult to deliver the news to a client that we have exhausted all options, and unless something outside our control changes, they will not be receiving child support payments. I learned how crucial it is to self-evaluate based on process, not results.

I got the opportunity to draft interrogatories and requests for production in a wrongful termination case. I had access to recordings of past MCAD hearings, and I really enjoyed the process of familiarizing myself with the facts, reading and rereading the complaint and answer, and pinpointing the gaps in our factual framework. I especially enjoyed the challenge of precision with definitions, rules, and language in general. I knew that opposing counsel would take any opportunity to misconstrue my requests if they were worded poorly or ambiguously, and it was satisfying to close those semantic loopholes.

I had a substantial research assignment that involved reviewing thousands of housing court orders in cases that involved bad conditions in tenancies. Tenants, who were often elderly or struggling with disabilities, were subjected to horrible situations like rodent and insect infestations, inadequate heat and hot water, and mold.



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Many appeared pro se and were not aware of their rights as tenants. I helped produce a spreadsheet that tabulated the bad conditions in each case and identified the percentage reductions in rent that were associated with each condition. The hope is to turn the data into an online program that tenants can use to self-advocate and inform their landlord of the legal consequences associated with failing to repair and abate these bad conditions. Even though so many tenants in the past have been withheld justice, the project gave me some hope that tenants in the future would have greater leverage to improve their situation.

I greatly appreciate Equal Justice America for making this summer possible.