

Viviana M. Gonzalez

September 5, 2023

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Building II – Suite 201
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I was selected to be a Summer 2023 Equal Justice America (“EJA”) fellow, and I am writing to provide an overview of my fellowship experience and what EJA’s support meant to me. This past summer, I interned with the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild (“NIPNLG”), a civil legal services organization working to defend and extend the rights of all noncitizens in this country, regardless of immigration status. During my internship, I had the opportunity to conduct legal research, consult on legislative advocacy, and learn more about federal regulations.

Prior to law school, I spent over four years working in Congress. While I certainly developed a deep understanding of policymaking during my previous career, my summer internship experience showed me another side of the policy world. Specifically, I worked closely with the End SIJS Backlog Coalition—a NIPNLG project—and learned more about how to advocate for policy for a specific, impacted community.

In my previous career, pragmatism and compromise was key. In this internship, I needed to figure out how to effectively advance specific policies without altering the core of what the coalition wanted to achieve—such as when I developed a long-term Congressional Republican outreach strategy for the Coalition’s key legislative goal. For this project, I also drafted materials to create a toolkit that advocates would be able to rely on and distribute in their efforts to garner support for the bill. This was an interesting challenge for me, as I needed to develop talking points that Congressional Republicans would be sympathetic to while also not deviating from the organization’s principles and positions.

I also learned more about coalitional work and balancing feedback from a large number of stakeholder groups. I was able to do when I drafted an organizational comment on proposed rulemaking to provide greater access to federal healthcare programs for immigrant youth. This experience with NIPNLG provided me a new lens through which to do policy work, and I feel reassured that I will be a more effective policymaker whether I return to government or nonprofit work after law school.

In addition to the legislative advocacy work that I conducted, I had the opportunity to conduct legal research as well. I provided an overview of the potential legal issues that could arise for individuals trying to obtain asylum on the basis of their evasion of the Russian draft. I also

assisted an attorney on a specific legal question that may arise during an upcoming case and how to potentially position the case to avoid a legal barrier.

Because I was selected as an EJA fellow, I was able to take advantage of the incredible opportunity to intern with NIPNLG. The support EJA provided me this summer has a significant impact on my ability to intern without worrying how I was going to support myself. I am deeply appreciative of the support EJA provided me, and I look forward to seeing EJA's impact grow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Viviana Gonzalez', written in a cursive style.

Viviana Gonzalez