

September 23, 2024

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
3007 E. Boundary Terrace, Suite 201
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Dan Ruben,

This summer I had the opportunity to intern at the Legal Aid Society in the Civil Division, Tenant Defense Unit. During my internship, I got the chance to work with experienced attorneys and witness judges in courtrooms. I was able to work with an array of low-income clients witnessing initial client intake screening where clients would be screened and possibly taken on to be represented for limited appearances. During this process I learned about the harsh conditions and issues with the housing system these clients encountered on a daily basis which caused them to face housing instability. I witnessed the client's reality with horrible habitability issues that landlords refused to make repairs and due to job instability which would result in tenants falling behind in rents. I learned a lot about the remedies and programs available to tenants as a defense such as the one-shot deal, City FHEPS, FHEPS programs that would help low-income clients not lose their housing.

I witnessed first-hand how clients were taken advantage of by landlords which often resulted in adverse impacts on the client's situations. I worked on completing initial intakes with clients and hearing from the clients about their stories. A memorable client experience was when I was working with the attorney and the landlord had miscalculated the client's rent and the client had a rent abatement defense. I witnessed the attorney argue in court and saw the decision which came in the tenant's favor and was a great precedent set forward. Also, I worked on submitting

stipulations of settlements, and discontinuous slips in which cases were closed because government funding/ charity funding came through. I worked on amended answers, research queries, witnessed trial preparations, and saw live different judges coming to decisions. It was truly an informative and great learning opportunity to be able to witness attorneys fighting against housing instability, learning the inner workings of the court system and how different judges approach cases. It was very rewarding learning how just calling 311 and just tenants speaking up could result in landlords fixing treacherous housing conditions. I also witnessed how grateful clients were for our help when we would get them funding for their back rent and then apply for FHEPS which would cover their rent moving forward. It was an amazing experience interning at the Legal Aid Society and witnessing devoted housing attorneys fighting for their clients.

Ushna Khan
Cardozo School of Law