

## Nathan H. Bruce

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September 5, 2024

Mr. Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Mr. Ruben,

I spent this past summer working for the Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP) in their Economic Security Unit (ESU). In this internship I was able to assist the ESU's clients and attorneys on a number of cases and issues. These tasks covered a fairly broad array of law, but all of them had the common thread of assisting low-income DC residents with obtaining some economic relief.

The largest single task that I had was drafting a Complaint for a client ("Ms. Q") who was planning to file suit against her former property management company, a company known for frequently mistreating tenants. The basis of the lawsuit is that the company have been pursuing her over an alleged debt which they had had already been to court about been years prior. The company argued that when they settled they had only intended to waive a portion of the debt, but the plain language of the settlement agreement led Ms. Q to believe that the entirety of the debt was forgiven. The alleged debt was multiple thousands of dollars, which was far more than Ms. Q, as a single mother with a federal housing voucher, would realistically have been able to afford. In the process of drafting this Complaint I conducted multiple factual interviews with Ms. Q, reviewed several documents related to the case, and did research on the relevant DC laws. This experience was highly rewarding on a personal level because I was able to do something that could meaningfully remove some stress from Ms. Q's life while also holding a notorious slumlord accountable. On a professional level, it was the most significant contribution that I have ever been able to make in a real legal matter. Although I did have some prior litigation drafting experience from writing a Motion in my clinic last semester, drafting this Complaint felt even more substantial because it was meant to initiate a case.

Other tasks that I had included drafting an affidavit for a retired gentleman ("Mr. P") who had been the victim of credit card fraud that was negatively affecting his credit score. To draft this affidavit, I interviewed Mr. P multiple times and analyzed credit reports and other documents in order to make sure all the facts in the affidavit were correct. This experience was rewarding as well and Mr. P was mostly a pleasure to work for, although it was at times a test of my patience. Mr. P would sometimes confidently recall the events a certain way, only for me to later realize after reviewing documents that he had been mistaken about significant facts that required me to revise the affidavit and inform Mr. P why I was doing so. Even this challenging aspect of the case was valuable experience as well though, because I do intend to continue working in legal aid and this will not be the last time I have this type of situation with a client.

Other valuable experiences that I had included doing initial factual assessments for several clients that were hoping to have their criminal records sealed. Most of the record sealing clients whose files I reviewed had no actual convictions but were still being held back from various types of employment for simply having been arrested in the past for charges that were dropped. One record sealing client was a man in his forties whose only criminal record was having an arrest for marijuana possession at 19 years old, an arrest which was still preventing him from obtaining employment doing security at military bases. Although I had been aware previously that criminal records were a major impediment in many peoples' lives, it was both infuriating and eye-opening to see real-life examples of people whose ability to earn a living were shackled by minor violations of outdated laws from the distant past.

As a whole, my experience at NLSP was a fantastic one. I intend to apply for an externship in their Family Law Unit this upcoming Spring as well as possibly for a postgrad position. I appreciate EJA's grant for easing my financial burden this summer and making it easier for myself and other law students to perform this kind of work.

Thank you kindly for your support,  
Nathan Bruce  
George Washington University Law School