



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Greater Boston Legal Services

**Update 1:** This summer, I've begun a 15-week internship with the Consumer Rights Unit of Greater Boston Legal Services. GBLS provides free civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and families in and around Boston, Massachusetts. The Consumer Rights Unit helps clients facing debt collection issues, predatory lending practices, scams, fraud, and abuse, and so much more. It also engages in impact advocacy. The CRU team identifies large-scale issues across our cases and advocates for change through both legal and extralegal avenues.

As a summer intern, my work closely mirrors that of the unit's staff attorneys: I research specific legal issues, meet with clients to discuss their cases, and attend court regularly. I also get the chance to work with the Consumer Rights Unit's Lawyer for the Day Program by representing a client facing debt collection in small claims court. These tasks give me the opportunity to sharpen my legal research and writing skills in a real-world professional setting and practice my oral advocacy. I am confident that the work I do has already made a difference to our community, and that it will continue to do so—even in the short 15-week period of my internship. I'm so grateful to EJA for making this possible.

**Update 2:** In my first month as an intern in the Consumer Rights Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services, I've had the chance to work on many exciting and impactful projects. One project that I've especially enjoyed is the Unit's Lawyer for the Day Program. Each week, attorneys and staff from GBLS go to various small claims court sessions across Boston. We represent anyone who doesn't have a lawyer and who agrees to our representation. We conduct an initial intake, and then review case documents for substantive defenses. Attorneys advise clients on ways to move forward, and, if necessary, represent them at a hearing. In just one afternoon with this program, we can clear or mitigate thousands of dollars of debt for clients who would have otherwise likely lost their case. This can make a huge difference in their lives, allowing them to preserve wealth and refocus it towards other goals. It's also been a great way to connect with community members. Often, the people we represent face a range of other legal issues. By meeting these clients and learning about the legal problems before they reach a point of crisis, we can better



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build trust with our clients and more effectively represent them. It's been an honor to participate in this program with the support of EJA, and I'm so excited to see how it progresses in the future.

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**Update 3:** Now that I'm about halfway through my internship with the Consumer Rights Unit of Greater Boston Legal Services, I've had the chance to gain substantial writing experience in a real-world legal setting. At the start of the summer, I was assigned the task of drafting a demand letter and a civil complaint on behalf of a client. While the task was largely writing-based, it began with a thorough factual investigation of the client's claims. I reviewed all relevant documents, created a timeline of events, and interviewed the client over the phone. I then conducted preliminary legal research. In doing so, I discovered that a federal law unexpectedly preempted all the state law claims we had planned to bring. I wrote up a research memo for my colleagues, who then advised me to go ahead with a demand letter and complaint based on my research. I drafted both documents, and after incorporating my supervisor's edits, they are now both ready to file. It's been such a satisfying experience to shape this project from beginning to end, and I've learned so much about research and writing outside of the classroom setting. I'm so grateful to EJA for making this professional growth possible, and I can't wait to see what else I can accomplish as an EJA Summer Fellow.

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**Update 4:** Throughout my summer at Greater Boston Legal Services, I've had the chance to represent clients in court through our Lawyer for the Day program and draft a variety of legal documents including a demand letter and civil complaint. I'm now excited to turn to a public-facing project: I'm currently drafting an online article about small claims Lawyer for the Day programs in Massachusetts. This project has involved both in-person networking and non-legal writing. I've had to connect with people at various legal aid organizations throughout the state to learn about their Lawyer for the Day programs, and to ensure that I've covered all the programs that exist in the state. The information available online just wasn't comprehensive enough to verify the information I needed. After gathering the details on each program from these contacts, I then turned to drafting the article. Because it's public-facing, the language and layout I use must be accessible to an ordinary reader. I've made an effort to use simple language, and I've broken my main points into headings and bullet points. I've so enjoyed this opportunity to learn skills aimed at connecting with our community directly. I do this work in part to break down the barriers between the legal system and the people it serves, and I have found this type of experience to do exactly that.

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**Update 5:** I've learned so much as an EJA fellow at Greater Boston Legal Services this summer. I've had the chance to improve my legal research and writing, develop direct client relationships, and practice my oral argument in court. I'm a better lawyer, community member, and colleague as result of my experience, and I'm so grateful to EJA for providing the support to make it happen.

The research and writing projects I got to work on were both engaging and innovative. For example, I wrote a research memo at the intersection of consumer rights law and housing law. I looked into whether consumer protection statutes could hold landlords liable for charging tenants fees they never agreed to. I also wrote a demand letter based on the Carmack



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Amendment—a federal statute governing moving companies. And I got to draft various motions, including motions to vacate, amend, and issue execution. I so enjoyed these chances to improve my legal research and writing skills, and to think creatively about the law.

In addition to practicing research and writing, I got to work directly with clients. For nearly every case, I spoke with the client directly on the phone to learn more about their legal issue. After investigating their case, I then communicated any advice or next steps to them. I learned to navigate the attorney-client relationship, and I reaffirmed my commitment to working in direct legal services in the future. It was an honor and a pleasure to be so close to the community I hope to serve as a future attorney.

Lastly, I had the opportunity to represent a client in small claims court as part of GBLS's Lawyer-for-the-Day program. The Lawyer-for-the-Day program allows GBLS attorneys to show up to small claims court once a week and represent everyone there. Attorneys review documents, advise clients, and, if needed, represent them at a hearing. This happens in the span of a few hours. As the culmination of my summer internship, I took on a case of my own at a Lawyer-for-the-Day session. I reviewed the client's documents, spoke with her at length about how she'd like to proceed, and ultimately argued the case at a hearing. I was able to reduce my client's damages by 95%, an outcome we were both extremely happy with.

Without EJA, I could not have done any of this. EJA's support has helped me become a better advocate, and I will keep its mission in mind in all of my future endeavors.