



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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| <b>ORGANIZATION</b> | Public Counsel      |

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**Update 1:** This Tuesday, I began my summer clerkship with Public Counsel’s impact litigation team, the Opportunity Under Law project. I spent most of the week doing orientation, getting trained on the various software Public Counsel uses, and familiarizing myself with the facts of the cases I will be assisting with this summer. While I am waiting to learn more about the specific assignments I will be working on this summer, they will primarily involve education equity, housing justice, and child welfare issues. Despite having only been here for a few days, I have already learned so much, from standing complications that can arise for minor plaintiffs as they reach the age of adulthood to jurisdictional challenges in the child welfare context, like the *Younger* abstention doctrine. It has been shocking to see how much the child welfare system differs from the legal system in general, particularly the rules regarding the right to an attorney for child welfare proceedings. I will also have the opportunity to work on cases at both the state and federal levels, and I hope these experiences will give me more clarity about which area I am interested in pursuing after law school.

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**Update 2:** This week marks my third at Public Counsel. I work for Public Counsel’s impact litigation team, the Opportunity Under Law project. After settling in and completing orientation during my first week, I transitioned into familiarizing myself with the two cases I will work on during my clerkship. The first involves an impact litigation suit challenging the foster care to homelessness pipeline for transition-age foster youth. The second involves a free speech and antidiscrimination challenge to a critical race theory ban and a forced outing policy that requires staff to report students who begin to socially transition their gender at school. During my second week, the majority of my time was dedicated to researching and drafting a Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support of Petition for Disclosure of Juvenile Case Files. Working on this memo has provided me with invaluable insight into juvenile courts' unique practices and operations. This past week, I also had the opportunity to learn more about the



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appeals process for subject matter jurisdiction. It has been gratifying to see how the skills I learned in classes such as Civil Procedure and Legal Research and Writing translate into the day-to-day practice of law, as well as to get exposure to litigation at both the state and level. I am so grateful to learn from experienced attorneys bringing such important civil rights suits. Each interaction I have with them and our clients further confirms my interest in pursuing a career in civil rights impact litigation.

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**Update 3:** I am now four weeks through my internship at Public Counsel's impact litigation team, the Opportunity Under Law project. I am shocked by how much I have learned so far and the amount of substantive work I have been able to do. For my long-term cases, I have been researching California election law to determine whether a recalled local official is eligible to run again in a subsequent special election. Additionally, I delved into the backgrounds and opinions of the justices in the division where our case is being tried. This experience has not only honed my skills in legal research and writing but has also deepened my understanding of California's election laws and judicial structure.

I also had the opportunity to attend a meeting about the claims we will bring in our amended complaint for one of the cases I am working on. It was great to get a glimpse into how this process works and to see firsthand how strategic decisions are made to strengthen our legal arguments. This hands-on involvement has further affirmed my interest in impact litigation and civil rights law.

Even with working remotely, I have been impressed by the amount of substantive meetings I have been able to attend and the extent to which the attorneys have gone out of their way to help me gain experience and see what they do on a day-to-day basis. This hands-on involvement has further affirmed my interest in litigation and civil rights law.

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**Update 4:** As I approach the final weeks of my summer clerkship, I have been reflecting on the incredible experience I have had so far. This experience has confirmed my interest in pursuing a career in civil rights impact litigation, and I am thrilled about the amount of substantive work I have been able to do so far. From researching California election law to watching the litigation team strategize about a novel substantive due process claim, I have learned so much during my time with Public Counsel, all of which has been made possible by my Equal Justice America fellowship.

In the coming weeks, I will be drafting a reply brief in one of our active cases. I am grateful to have been given such an important assignment and eager to further develop my legal writing skills. Additionally, I have been working on a research assignment involving probate guardianship and the hidden foster care system. This research has provided me with valuable



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insights into the child welfare system, and I have enjoyed the opportunity to work closely with outside organizations on this assignment.

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**Update 5:** This week marks my last at Public Counsel's impact litigation team, the Opportunity Under Law project. As I look back on this summer, I am beyond grateful for what I have learned, the people I have met, and the diverse range of substantive work I have been able to undertake. Throughout my time at Public Counsel, I was primarily assigned to two impact litigation cases. The first case challenges a local school board's Critical Race Theory ban and its forced outing policy for transgender and gender non-conforming students. The second suit seeks to vindicate the rights of transition-age foster youth to stable, safe housing and supportive services. Both cases allowed me to engage with critical civil rights and social justice issues, further affirming my interest in pursuing a career in civil rights impact litigation.

This summer, I tackled a wide range of tasks, including researching the eligibility of a recalled local official to run for re-election under California Election Law, drafting a Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support of a Petition for Disclosure of Juvenile Case Files, and helping draft a letter urging juvenile courts to enforce legislation that arguably allows parenting foster youth to be provided with representation in probate guardianship proceedings. These experiences have enriched my understanding of complex legal doctrines and processes, such as the *Younger* abstention doctrine and the intricacies of the juvenile court system, as well as the inner workings of discovery and appeals processes.

In addition to the substantive lessons I will take away from this summer, I have developed critical legal writing skills, particularly in appellate litigation. I also gained a deeper understanding of the importance of self-care in public interest lawyering. Serving our clients effectively requires that we are at our best, which involves recognizing our own capacity limits and making time for self-care outside of work. Additionally, I gained valuable insights into the importance of collaboration and coalition-building with other organizations in non-profit work. Working together with different stakeholders not only brings more resources and expertise to the table but also enhances the overall quality and impact of our advocacy efforts.

As my internship comes to an end, I am both energized and inspired by the impactful work I have been a part of. The experiences and relationships I have built at Public Counsel will undoubtedly continue to influence my future career path. I am deeply grateful to Public Counsel and Equal Justice America for making this opportunity possible. If you are able, I would greatly appreciate your support for the Equal Justice America Fundraiser, which helps law students like me to pursue their passions for public interest careers.