



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

SUMMER 2024

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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ORGANIZATION	Michigan Elder Justice Initiative (MEJI)

Update 1: This summer, I am very excited to be a Law Clerk for the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative. This organization does such amazing work to protect the rights of people with disabilities and older adults, and I am so humbled to be a part of it.

Today, I had the opportunity to sit in on the Civil Rights, Judiciary, and Public Safety committee meeting for the Michigan State Senate. I was able to listen to several different people on how to best protect the civil rights of vulnerable adults. I am so grateful for the opportunity to see advocacy in action and to learn from seasoned professionals, especially my supervisor Alison Hirschel, and my colleagues Nicole Shannon and Salli Pung, who attended the meeting with me.

I am so incredibly thankful for the Equal Justice America Fellowship and the John Paul Stevens Foundation, who have both funded my summer work. Organizations like these allow me to do the work that I feel called to do.

Thank you so much to everyone who has made it possible for me to have this opportunity. I can't wait to see what the rest of the summer holds!

Update 2: It's hard to believe that I'm already halfway through the summer, and halfway through my internship at the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative. I have learned so much about legislative advocacy and elder law in these last five weeks. I am so excited to keep learning in the next five weeks. A part of me felt quite sad that the weeks were passing by so quickly, because I am really loving the work that I am doing; but I suppose that is some healthy confirmation that this is the type of work I'd like to do long-term. I'm so grateful for a summer placement that has allowed me to gain this experience and insight.

Update 3: It has been another couple of weeks, and I am writing with another update on my summer work at the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative. As I am reflecting, I continue to approach this summer experience with a profound sense of gratitude.

I am grateful for the compassionate, fierce advocates that I am working with and learning from. I



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took a short bereavement leave for part of the last couple of weeks, and my colleagues have been nothing but supportive. Upon my return, they have warmly welcomed me back into the work they are doing and have worked with me to create opportunities so that I may continue to grow in my research and writing skills and work on new projects.

I am also grateful for the foundations that are funding the work I am doing this summer. They are allowing me to do the fulfilling work that I want to do, and to gain experience in human rights law, where I intend to focus my career.

Update 4: I am happy to share that I have grown so much in my research skills this summer. At the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative (through the Michigan Advocacy Program), I have had the opportunity to explore a broad and deep well of research. I have sifted through public benefits such as Medicare and Medicaid, building upon the base of knowledge that I had from my Social Work education. I've also been able to analyze regulations from agencies like the Department of Health and Human Services regarding minimum staffing and transparency in nursing home funding. Today, I spent much of the day sorting through and summarizing the statutes in the Michigan Penal Code which have to do with elder abuse. I've had the breadth of civil and criminal law, ranging from a single regulation to searching through an entire penal code. I have also been able to appreciate a new depth of knowledge, as I have been able to focus solely on elder law and disability rights.

Update 5: Today was my last day at the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative / Michigan Advocacy Program. I have had such an incredible experience this summer. I have been learning under fierce, seasoned advocates about systemic legal and policy work, and about the field of elder law in general. I'm so grateful that I had the opportunity to closely observe advocacy for elder and disability rights, and to participate in it myself.

Much of this summer has involved honing my legal research skills. I came into this clerkship knowing next to nothing about elder law, and I have left with a broad wealth of knowledge based on research that I have done about guardianship, Medicare and Medicaid, elder abuse, and transparency in nursing home funding—to name just a few topics. I am so thankful for all I have gotten to learn about substantive law, and I am even more thankful for the skills related to advocacy, research, and communication that I have fostered, and that I will continue to develop throughout my career.

I cannot say enough how truly grateful I am for all of the people who have made this summer clerkship possible for me. From the John Paul Stevens Foundation and Equal Justice America who have funded my work, to Alison Hirschel and Nicole Shannon who oversaw much of my work this summer, to my friends and family who have supported me every step of the way—thank you all so much, for everything. I am also so appreciative of the University of Illinois College of Law and to everyone there who has supported me in my endeavors. It is because of all of the support I have received that I have been able to pursue public interest work this summer, and to have the wonderful experience I have had. Every individual that I have worked with up until this point, as well as every individual and organization that have supported me financially have all opened the doors for me to work in public interest, and to do this work well. I'm sad to be leaving MEJI because my experience was amazing; at the same time, I'm excited to continue developing my skills with classes in a few short weeks, and I cannot wait to see what the future holds.