

Dear Executive Director Ruben,

I hope that this letter finds you well. My name is Maiya Werba and I am one of the law students lucky enough to have received an Equal Justice America (EJA) award this past summer. I wanted to express how meaningful and important it was to me to receive this additional support for my summer position at Disability Rights Advocates (DRA). I have always wanted to be able to work with and advocate for individuals with disabilities but had been concerned about the financial elements of this path for a summer position, which is why this fellowship was so helpful to me.

Being able to engage in such meaningful work was incredibly enlightening and an excellent learning opportunity for me. Firstly, I was able to spend a lot of time discussing the field with my supervisors and learning about the nuances of disability rights work. Secondly, I gained experience in a wide variety of legal skills, such as deposition review, writing memorandums, and legal research. This summer really solidified for me how diverse the field of disability rights is, as I covered cases that centered on discrimination against unhoused people, sidewalk accessibility, and education in prisons.

This summer I was also lucky enough to get to have client interactions, which is relatively rare in impact litigation spaces. It was incredibly rewarding and informative to see the communicative, respectful approach the attorneys at DRA used to interact with clients. Likewise, it was heartening to see the collaboration between DRA and other organizations, such as centers for independent living, based on mutual respect and sincere care for the communities that they serve. Even though some of the cases I worked on had significant setbacks due to new Supreme Court precedents, watching my supervisors adapt and continue their advocacy was inspiring. I hope that I can use this experience to continue to do similar work throughout my legal career.

Sincerely,  
Maiya Werba