



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2025

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Delia Pless
LAW SCHOOL	Chicago Kent College of Law
ORGANIZATION	Legal Aid Chicago

Final Reflection:

This summer at Legal Aid Chicago has been nothing short of transformative—for my clients, for my development as an advocate, and for my sense of what it means to do meaningful legal work in service of others. When I first began, I knew I wanted to support workers confronting injustice, but I could not have anticipated the range of issues I would be entrusted with or the depth of responsibility I would feel toward the clients who placed their trust in us.

Early on, I met clients who had been denied unemployment insurance or who had seen their hard-earned wages withheld. Many were navigating financial precarity, caring for children, or juggling multiple jobs. Their cases taught me that “wage theft” or “UI denial” are not abstract terms but deeply personal crises—often determining whether a family can afford groceries or rent. Assisting with intake interviews, I learned the importance of listening carefully and asking the right questions, because for many clients, our conversation was the first time someone truly heard their story.

As my responsibilities grew, I took on writing assignments that forced me to stretch as both a researcher and a legal writer. I drafted arguments for unemployment insurance appeals before the Illinois Department of Employment Security Board of Review, challenging 602(A) misconduct allegations. These cases required close attention to statutory language, administrative precedent, and the often-fraught facts of a worker’s departure. Crafting those arguments, I realized how powerful precise legal writing can be: a well-supported paragraph may mean the difference between a client receiving benefits or being left without income.

Later in the summer, I broadened my experience by drafting an Illinois Human Rights Commission Request for Review, observing an Illinois Department of Labor hearing on wage violations, and researching claims under the Victims’ Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA). Each project deepened my understanding of the patchwork of statutes designed to protect workers, and also highlighted the gaps that still leave too many vulnerable.



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The most impactful moment came in my final week, when I represented a client at an unemployment insurance appeal hearing. Preparing for and conducting the hearing was both nerve-wracking and exhilarating. It happened to take place on my birthday—a fitting reminder of how much this work means to me and how I want to spend my professional life. Standing beside my client, ensuring her voice was heard, I felt the weight and privilege of what it means to be an advocate.

I leave this summer with immense gratitude—for the brilliant and generous attorneys and staff at Legal Aid Chicago, for the clients who allowed me into their lives, and for Equal Justice America's support in making this experience possible. I am returning to law school with sharper skills, deeper humility, and a renewed commitment to fighting for workers' rights and for equal justice.