



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Josh Palackal
LAW SCHOOL	Boston University
ORGANIZATION	Education Law Center of PA

Final Reflection:

As an Equal Justice America Fellow with the Education Law Center of PA ("ELC"), I had the privilege of deeply exploring my biggest legal passion: educational justice.

This summer provided me with a wide variety of experiences that I will carry with me as I continue to pursue a legal career in education law. Much of my work focused on editing, drafting, and updating a series of factsheets to be used in ELC's "Back-to-School Guide," a resource hub of informational materials and self-advocacy tools for Pennsylvania families to use to learn about and assert their educational rights. The factsheets I worked on spanned a large array of topics, from the rights of LGBTQ+ students in sports to advocating for inclusive early childhood education settings. After the Supreme Court's unfortunate decision in BPJ, I was also tasked with incorporating an analysis of this ruling and its ramifications for school sports policies into the organization's factsheets on LGBTQ+ rights. These experiences exposed me to areas of education law I was previously unfamiliar with, deepening my knowledge of this fascinating area of practice.

I also had the opportunity to support over 15 callers to ELC's helpline on a variety of issues. I was able to provide these callers with legal consultations and advice on how they could resolve the issues they were experiencing, including truancy, expulsions, and discrimination against students with disabilities. One of my clients was a mother who received a summons to truancy court from a school claiming that her son had missed too many days of school without a proper excuse. This woman, however, had submitted multiple medical excuse notes (that the school randomly decided to stop accepting) explaining that the child would miss parts of the school week to receive necessary medical care that the school was unable to provide. With my



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supervising attorney, I was able to counsel this client on how she could advocate for herself and her child at her truancy hearing and work with her son's IEP team to ensure a similar situation would not happen again.

At ELC, I was also able to assist in various direct representation efforts, particularly for preschoolers with disabilities who were expelled from their preschools. For example, I wrote a compensatory education demand for a 4-year-old who was denied necessary speech therapy for seven months and then excluded from two preschools. I also had the opportunity to observe ELC attorneys in IEP meetings and partook in strategy discussions regarding prominent settlement negotiations with Elwyn, Philadelphia's early intervention services provider. My experiences working directly with impacted families with ELC were especially valuable, making me better prepared for a career advocating for marginalized students.

I am incredibly thankful to EJA for helping make this work possible through providing me and so many other law students with financial assistance for the summer. This type of support makes it so that more public interest law students can securely achieve their dreams and that more indigent people can receive the legal services they need. EJA's support allowed me to solidify my passions and work towards eliminating barriers to education for both my clients and all Pennsylvanian families. As I enter my 3L year and a career in education advocacy, I'm thankful to have had such an incredible experience as an Equal Justice America Fellow.