



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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ORGANIZATION	Housing Conservation Coordinators

I am very grateful to Equal Justice America for supporting my summer work at Housing Conservation Coordinators (HCC). This fellowship gave me the opportunity to work directly with tenants facing serious housing problems and to see, in a very real way, how much effective legal advocacy can matter in someone's life.

Throughout the summer, I worked alongside attorneys and advocates assisting low-income tenants with a range of housing matters. I spent a significant amount of time learning the day-to-day realities of housing practice, including reviewing case documents, conducting legal research, helping prepare matters for court, and supporting clients as they navigated Housing Court and related benefit systems. Before this summer, I understood in a general sense that housing cases could be high stake. After working with clients directly, I came to understand how personal and destabilizing these cases can be.

One client in particular has stayed with me. He was an older man with serious health issues who was facing eviction after falling more than \$50,000 behind on his rent. His situation was difficult not only because of the amount owed, but because his health made it much harder for him to manage the agencies and processes that could potentially help him. It was clear that simply addressing the court case would not be enough.

Working with the team at HCC, I saw how housing advocacy often requires looking beyond the immediate legal problem. We helped connect him with Adult Protective Services and worked to get assistance through the Human Resources Administration. Ultimately, HRA agreed to pay more than \$50,000 in back rent. Seeing that happen was one of the most meaningful moments of my summer. What had initially seemed like an overwhelming situation became something that could actually be resolved, and the client had a real opportunity to remain in his home.



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That experience changed the way I think about what it means to advocate for someone. The most important part of the work was not just understanding the law. It was to understand the client's full situation, recognizing what resources might help, and making sure those resources were actually accessible to him. I learned that sometimes the most effective solution comes from combining legal advocacy with social services, public benefits, and persistence.

More broadly, my time at HCC showed me how difficult the legal system can be to navigate without help. Housing Court can be intimidating even for someone familiar with legal terminology and procedure. For many tenants, especially those dealing with financial hardship, health problems, or other personal challenges, the process can be overwhelming. I saw how much of a difference it made to have an attorney or advocate there to explain the process, identify possible defenses or resources, negotiate on the client's behalf, and simply make sure the client was not facing the system alone.

This summer also made my interest in housing and access to justice feel much more concrete. Housing has always seemed to me like one of the most fundamental forms of stability a person can have. Working at HCC gave me a better understanding of how quickly that stability can be threatened and how important legal services are in helping people preserve it.

I am leaving the fellowship with stronger legal research and writing skills, more experience working with clients, and a much deeper appreciation for public interest advocacy. More importantly, I am leaving with a better understanding of the kind of lawyer I want to become. No matter where my career ultimately takes me, this experience reinforced for me the importance of staying connected to pro bono and public interest work and using my legal education in ways that have a direct impact on people's lives.

Thank you to Equal Justice America and its supporters for making this summer possible. I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with HCC, to have learned from its attorneys and advocates, and most of all, to have played even a small role in helping clients facing serious housing instability.