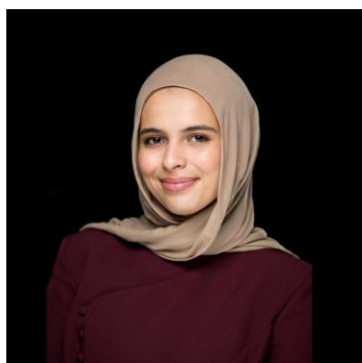




EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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LAW SCHOOL	Rutgers Law
ORGANIZATION	Neighborhood Defender Service

Final Reflection:

This summer I interned with Neighborhood Defender Service at their Detroit location. I had a great experience there and learned so much about the criminal legal system. I witnessed first-hand both the day-to-day operations of the criminal legal system and the profound ways it often fails the communities it is meant to serve. Through this experience, I have developed practical litigation skills. I have conducted legal research and drafted motions on behalf of clients, translating complex legal issues into persuasive written advocacy. I have observed voir dire proceedings and assisted with background research on potential jurors, experiences that deepened my understanding of how bias can shape jury selection and trial outcomes. I have also participated in trial preparation, client counseling, and case strategy discussions.

One of the most nerve-racking but growth-inducing points in my internship was the opportunity to speak on the record at a preliminary examination at District Court (lower-level trial) and argue against my client being "bound over" to the Michigan Circuit Court (higher-level trial court). Throughout this process, I first identified the elements of each charge that my client had been charged with. After identifying those elements, I began to delineate arguments that the government has not met each element of the offense. After that process, I began developing and creating cross-examination questions for both of the witnesses. Once this was completed, I started prep with my supervisor to strategize the best ways to ask the questions, as well as what questions may not be the best to proceed with. One thing I learned through this process was that in some cases the argument of the PE is done to cement trust between the client and defense counsel. In this case, my supervisor was aware that this PE would most likely be bound over, but that it was important to argue at this stage so that the client was aware that we would



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zealously argue on their behalf. When the day came to represent the client in court, my nerves were at an all-time high. Surprisingly and thankfully, I was able to cross-examine the witness and argue that the prosecution had not met the probable cause needed to bind over the matter. Ultimately, the case did get bound over, but the experience was one that taught me a lot about presenting arguments, building trust, and always being overprepared.