

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13450 East Boundary Road  
Building II, Suite 204  
Midlothian, VA 23112

August 31, 2016

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to serve as an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer. I spent my summer working at Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) in Charlottesville, VA, where I gained invaluable legal experience and reaffirmed my commitment to immigrant and worker rights and economic justice.

One of the most meaningful experiences of my summer was assisting with a federal class action lawsuit against the Virginia DMV for its policy of suspending residents' driver's licenses for unpaid court fees and fines without assessing ability to pay. As I got to know our clients and heard their stories, I learned how common policies like license suspension have the insidious effect of keeping poor people in a cycle of poverty. After having their licenses suspended, our clients and countless other Virginians faced the impossible choice of losing their jobs or going to jail for driving on a suspended license. As a summer intern, I had the privilege of contributing to this important case by researching the history of license suspension laws, alternatives to suspension, and various other issues.

I also assisted a client who had been denied the ability to file for divorce solely because of his immigration status. To evaluate his legal opinions, I conducted extensive research on complex legal issues involving Section 1983, judicial immunity, declaratory relief, and the constitutional right to divorce.

One of the best aspects of my summer was working directly with clients. I represented a woman who had been fired from her job after surviving a difficult battle with an illness. To make matters worse, the government denied her unemployment insurance. I represented her before an administrative judge, and we were able to recover the benefits she deserved. I also assisted workers in filing wage and hour claims with the Virginia Employment Commission and assessed potential claims under Title VII, the Family Medical Leave Act, and the Fair Labor Standards Act. Building on my experience as an outreach worker, I performed outreach to immigrant workers in agriculture and other low-wage industries on Virginia's Eastern Shore, a region with few low-cost legal services.

As a summer intern at LAJC, I had the opportunity to provide meaningful legal assistance to immigrants, low-wage workers, and marginalized communities. I performed challenging, substantive legal work, including legal research, claims analysis, legal writing, and questioning witnesses in an administrative hearing. My experience gave me a better understanding of the injustices poor and immigrant communities routinely suffer and the importance of expanding

affordable legal services. I greatly appreciate the financial support provided by Equal Justice America, which helped make this experience possible.

Sincerely,

Kristin Donovan  
American University Washington College of Law, Class of 2017

Via email only:

Dan Ruben

Director, Equal Justice America

[dan@equaljusticeamerica.org](mailto:dan@equaljusticeamerica.org)

August 30, 2016

Re: Kristin Donovan, summer clerkship evaluation

Dear Dan:

I write in evaluation of Kristin Donovan's summer clerkship at the Legal Aid Justice Center. It was a pleasure to work with Kristin; she worked on a wide variety of projects with us this summer and was an asset to our office in all of them.

She conducted detailed research for our pending litigation against the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles challenging their practice of automatically suspending the drivers' licenses of individuals with unpaid court costs without any evaluation of their ability to pay. She also evaluated possible claims and defenses related to a clerk's office's refusal to grant divorces to undocumented individuals. Both of these projects required significant research and writing, and Kristin's final product advanced our goals in both situations. Her legal writing was clear, detailed, and well-researched, and she plainly grasped the issues at hand as well as any of the attorneys working on the cases.

She researched and investigated a number of other issues as well, including preemption under the Fair Labor Standards Act and joint employment under the Family Medical Leave Act. In all cases, she grasped the issues and produced clear written work that explained what she had found and where she had found it. Importantly, unlike many law students, she indicated not only what she had researched but what she had not, allowing reviewers to effectively follow up on her work.

Kristin successfully represented an unemployment claimant in an administrative appeal, and she was both well prepared and able to think on her feet to meet unexpected challenges. She also met with a variety of clients, interviewed them regarding their legal issues, consulted me or other attorneys about what they told her and the next steps, and followed up with them. Kristin was sympathetic to the clients and their concerns, while remaining professional and measured in her explanations of the strengths and weaknesses of their claims. In many cases, she identified legal issues in the clients' stories, and after checking with a supervisor, researched those issues herself and wrote them up in language clear enough for the average client to understand.

I have no doubt that Kristin will excel in whatever area of law she chooses to pursue, and she was an asset to our office throughout the summer.

Sincerely,

/s/Erin Trodden