

August 31, 2014

EJA Summer 2014 Fellowship Letter

Dear Dan Ruben,

This summer, I interned at Catholic Charities of Dallas in the Immigration Legal Services office. During my time at CCD, I assisted multiple low-income clients with filing various types of immigration applications. Most of the cases I worked on were applications for citizenship and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) – a quasi-status available to undocumented persons who entered the United States as children. DACA allows an individual to live and work legally in the United States for two years. Because the renewal application dropped over the summer, many of the applications I filed on behalf of clients were DACA renewals.

One of my favorite cases this summer was a citizenship application. The applicant was in her sixties, and had lived as a U.S. resident for several years. She had waited to naturalize for a long time due to the high cost of the application – not only would she have to pay the immigration filing fee, but also an attorney fee for the assistance she received in preparing the application. Thanks to CCD, she was able to participate in a “citizenship workshop.” Using a grant received specifically to fund preparation of citizenship applications for low-income clients, CCD offered multiple workshops over the summer that reduced the attorney cost to only \$60.

During the workshop, I helped the client complete her application so she could finally apply to become a U.S. citizen. She was so grateful for my help that she hugged me after she signed the application. Working with CCD was wonderful experience. So many people need legal immigration assistance but cannot afford to pay for it. The fellowship money from EJA allowed me to work for these clients through CCD so that I could help as many applicants as possible. I am extremely grateful to CCD and EJA for an amazing summer internship.

With gratitude,

Alaina Zermeno
University of Texas School of Law
Anticipated Graduation Date: May 2015

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