

October 10, 2016

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II – Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I wanted to thank you for granting me funding so that I could spend my summer at the East Bay Community Law Center in Berkeley—it was truly an eye-opening and gratifying experience. The clinic was my first foray into providing direct service to clients and I never thought I would have the amazing opportunity this early to have my own clients. The clinic entrusted me with a great deal of responsibility. This was at times very stressful, but the sense of responsibility really only fueled my drive to work.

This summer, I was in the Health and Welfare Department. My clients were low-income Alameda county residents who were unable to access welfare benefits. A huge majority of our clients were disabled, HIV positive, or children. Even in my brief ten-week period, I feel I was able to make a considerable difference. I handled over ten cases independently with the supervision of a licensed clinic attorney. I also met with several clients during our weekly Public Benefits Workshops.

My first client was an HIV positive Burmese refugee who also suffered from depression. The administration had denied his welfare, claiming that he was no longer disabled and could return to work. One of the biggest issues with the case was the language barrier, as my client was only able to speak Burmese and there is a general lack of Burmese translators in hospitals and in general. The other issue was the client's culture—which strongly discouraged him from talking about any weakness and his emotions—making his depression barely documented in his medical history. I was able to, after working with my clinical supervisor, find a translator and fund a consulting psychologist to conduct a meeting consultation and write a medical report to provide definitive medical support for our brief.

Working with clients like this one gave me a different and better perspective to the legal field. It is so easy to get swept up in the flurry of “big law” and to chase the money. Working at EBCLC was like hitting the “reset” button after spending a year at law school and helped to get my head straight on what I went into law school to do. It was incredibly rewarding to actually be able to use my legal education to help low income, disabled clients to gain access to welfare to support their basic living expenses.

My client’s story is not unique to the clinic. Students who volunteer their time so that the clinic can function have time after time done amazing work to aid the people who arguably need legal aid the most. Thank you once again for providing the funding to help students like me help clients like the one I just described.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Hu', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jenny Hu

J.D. Candidate, Class of 2018

Cornell Law School