

August 29, 2011

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director, Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Equal Justice America for funding an enjoyable, educational and deeply motivating Summer Fellowship at Bay Area Legal Aid. Bay Legal provides civil legal services to low-income individuals throughout the Bay Area, in multiple practice areas including housing preservation, domestic violence, public benefits, health care access and youth justice. I worked this summer in the Public Benefits Unit of Bay Legal's Alameda County Office in Oakland, California.

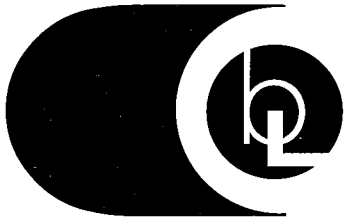
As a Public Benefits Law Clerk, I worked to help clients get the Food Stamps, Cash Aid (CalWORKs) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to which they were entitled. I advocated for a mother and her three children, helping them obtain the Food Stamps benefit from which they had been wrongly cut off. I represented a homeless client in a hearing for SSI, wrote a brief for an Administrative Law Judge, interviewed clients and prepared a client for hearing. I also supported multiple clients with the SSI application process, a process which can take many years and can be extremely difficult for indigent and disabled clients to navigate.

The most meaningful part of the experience for me involved supporting youth clients to obtain the benefits they deserved and needed. Working with Bay Legal's youth clients, many of whom are criminally involved or homeless, really emphasized for me the dramatic stabilizing role that legal aid can have in a person's life. Although this is true for all clients, it was particularly stark with youth. For example, for a youth reentering the community after incarceration, legal aid could mean having a home to return to rather than facing the streets. It could mean having a supportive school placement with appropriate mental health services, rather than having severe mental health issues be neglected and worsen. It could mean having a family network whose parenting efforts are supported by benefit dollars, rather than a distressed family network wondering how it will make ends meet.

Every day, the work done at Bay Legal felt relevant, compelling and crucial. My summer experience has been a wonderfully motivating way to begin what I hope will be a career of advocacy for marginalized individuals. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Equal Justice America for supporting both advocacy for low-income individuals and the law students who hope to pursue it.

Sincerely,

Ceilidh Gao
Harvard Law School
J.D. Candidate 2013



Ramón P. Arias
Executive Director

BAY AREA LEGAL AID

WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE

July 29, 2011

(via email transmission only)

Mr. Dan Ruben, Executive Director

Equal Justice America
Building II - Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Ceilidh Gao; Summer Legal Clerkship at Bay Area Legal Aid

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing in reference to Ceilidh Gao, who worked as a 2011 Summer Law Clerk at the Alameda County Regional office of Bay Area Legal Aid, located in Oakland, California. Ms. Gao received funding for her clerkship from Equal Justice America.

It was a delight to work with Ceilidh this summer. She is hard working, intelligent, and works well with others. She mainly worked with low-income clients who have mental and/or physical disabilities, helping them with issues related to their public benefits.

I gave Ceilidh several difficult assignments. She quickly learned the substantive law and ably applied the facts of each case to the law. She wrote several persuasive letter briefs for her clients. Ceilidh is an excellent writer. She works efficiently, and her legal analysis is thorough and accurate.

Ceilidh worked well with our clients. I observed her interview clients and prepare a client to testify at an administrative hearing. She has a pleasant and easy-going manner that works well with our low-income client population. Ceilidh represented clients at Social Security meetings and at a hearing. She was well-prepared and professional. Without her help, these clients would have had a difficult time navigating confusing administrative procedures.

In a short period of time, Ceilidh helped several clients resolve their public benefits problems and I know they are grateful for her help and dedication. Ceilidh has both the legal skills and personal skills to be an excellent public interest attorney. Thank you for supporting her work with Bay Area Legal Aid.

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Sincerely,

Doris Y. Ng, Staff Attorney