

August 26, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am a third year student at Harvard Law School and recently completed my summer internship with the Greater Boston Legal Service's Housing Unit. My internship was made possible in part by the Legal Services Fellowship I received from Equal Justice America. I would like to thank you for awarding me this fellowship and would like to thank your donors for making these fellowships possible. The fellowship not only allowed me to help preserve the housing of low-income tenants in greater Boston but also helped me gain the experience and expertise I need to continue my career in public interest law.

At GBLS, I worked with senior staff attorneys Stefanie Balandis and Dick Bauer on the Quincy District Court Civil Gideon Project. The Civil Gideon Project is part of an effort by Professor James Greiner at Harvard Law School to measure the effects of full legal services representation on the outcomes of cases. With the supervision of Attorneys Balandis and Bauer, I took primary responsibility for five of the cases selected for full representation. Under Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Rule 3:03, I was able to appear on behalf of these clients in Quincy District Court. In addition to my work on these cases, I also interviewed clients, helped pro se tenants complete answer and discovery forms, conducted research, and wrote pleadings, motions, discovery requests, and agreements for my supervising attorneys' cases.

My most complex and rewarding case involved a Section 8 tenant who lived with her children in a suburban single-family home. Despite paying her portion of the rent on time every month, her landlord brought an eviction action against her and her family. Just a week after taking the case, I won a motion to dismiss the landlord's claim for possession based on an inadequate notice to quit.

Despite preserving the client's tenancy, my advocacy was far from over. I prevented their water from being shut off because of the landlord's failure to pay the water bill. I forced the landlord to repair the serious violations of the state sanitary code present throughout the house. These repairs not only resulted in a healthier and safer home for my client and her family but also ensured that she could retain her valuable Section 8 voucher. Finally, I helped my client secure funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to replace her washer and dryer that had been destroyed by serious spring flooding.

The Legal Services Fellowship allowed me to assist this client and many others. It allowed me to spend several additional weeks at GBLS and helped me cover the costs of travel to Quincy District Court and my clients' homes. I cannot thank you enough for awarding me this fellowship.

Sincerely,

Libby Benton
Harvard Law School, 2011