

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

August 27, 2014

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, I was fortunate to intern in the Employment Law Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services (“GBLS”). GBLS is a legal services organization that offers free legal services to low –income individuals in various areas of law such as family law, immigration, housing, and employment, among others. Within the Employment Law unit, I had the opportunity to work on a variety of assignments involving different areas of employment law including wage and hour disputes, unemployment insurance, and also a few tax cases.

I represented Mr. M at an administrative hearing appeal to reinstate his unemployment benefits, which had been wrongfully denied by the Department of Unemployment Assistance. Mr. M had worked at the same kitchen for over 8 years and was fired due to misunderstanding a supervisor. When I first spoke to Mr. M, I found out that he had been fired 7 months prior and was having a hard time finding a suitable job and desperately needed unemployment benefits to sustain himself while he searched for employment. Along with the help of my supervisor and a GBLS attorney, I prepared Mr. M for the hearing and we were able to prove that Mr. M did not intentionally violate any workplace policies. We won the appeal and Mr. M received a large check from the DUA for all of the backdated benefits for which he was entitled.

I also had the opportunity to help a tax client file an Offer in Compromise with the Internal Revenue Service. Mr. S is a recent immigrant from Guatemala who is currently working on obtaining U.S. residency; he moved to this country with the hope of establishing a better life for himself and his family. However, Mr. S, because he was new to the country and new to filing taxes, fell prey to a dishonest tax preparer and wound up owing the IRS over \$20,000 including back taxes and penalties. Mr. S works as a janitor and supports his stay-at-home wife and three children and would likely have ended up paying down the IRS debt for the rest of his life. But I helped Mr. S gather all of his financial information, filled out the IRS forms, and drafted a letter to the IRS explaining Mr. S’s circumstances. If the IRS accepts the offer, Mr. S will have to pay no more than \$500 provided he files error-free tax returns in the future.

Even though I only got to help a few clients in my limited capacity at GBLS, I was very humbled by how grateful the clients were for my help. I made a huge difference in their lives and I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to serve the underserved

in our community. I also greatly appreciate the financial assistance I received from Equal Justice America, without which I would not have been able to intern at GBLS this summer.

Sincerely,

Emely Portillo
Suffolk University
Law School, c/o 2015