

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to thank you, Equal Justice America, and everyone who donated to Equal Justice America for your support, which made my summer with the Housing Unit of the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia possible. This was an incredible summer, and confirmed for me that I want to dedicate my career to direct legal services.

In my first week at Legal Aid, I began working with a single, recently-widowed mother who was in imminent danger of homelessness. Over the course of the summer, I worked on her case as it progressed through multiple administrative tribunals and the Landlord-Tenant Court. With our help, by the end of the summer she had secured a housing voucher—and with it, a chance to obtain safe, affordable housing for her family.

Over the summer, I took the lead in helping tenants with substandard housing conditions obtain needed repairs by writing demand letters and negotiating with landlords. For example, I helped one elderly woman get her air conditioning fixed—a potentially life-or-death matter in DC's sweltering summers. I wrote motions, discovery requests, and helped to prepare cases for trial. I took a central role in the work of the District of Columbia's Access to Justice initiative, reviewing thousands of complaints filed in Landlord-Tenant Court and identifying those with strong defenses for representation by Legal Aid, other legal services providers, or pro bono counsel. I researched novel questions of law that will help Legal Aid to bring impact litigation challenging pernicious new forms of housing discrimination.

I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to do this work. This summer was a deeply meaningful, challenging, and exciting experience for me, but moreover, it made a difference in helping to ensure that DC residents did not become homeless, or have to suffer unsafe housing conditions, for lack of a lawyer.

Thank you.

Rachel Smith
J.D. Candidate, 2018
Georgetown University Law Center

October 9, 2017

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 Boundary Rd # 204B
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing this letter to evaluate Rachel Smith's performance as a summer law student intern with the housing unit at the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia from May to August 2017. Rachel was a real asset to our unit, and we thank Equal Justice America for helping to support her work with us.

Legal Aid is the oldest and largest general civil legal services provider in the District of Columbia. Since 1932, Legal Aid has been committed to "making justice real" in individual and systemic ways for District of Columbia residents. Legal Aid provides individual representation in housing, public benefits, family/domestic violence, and consumer law cases. In addition, an appellate project represents individual clients and serves as *amicus* before the D.C. Court of Appeals, federal courts of appeals, and the Supreme Court. Its attorneys also advocate for changes in policy before the D.C. Council and administrative agencies.

The housing unit focuses its practice on defending tenants in eviction suits in D.C. Superior Court's Landlord and Tenant Branch, where we have a court-based legal services project that provides same-day representation to tenants. We also represent tenants in affirmative suits against their landlords and represent tenants before administrative bodies such as the Office of Administrative Hearings and the D.C. Housing Authority's Office of Fair Hearings.

I served as one of Rachel's co-supervisors this summer. Rachel assisted attorneys with a wide variety of tasks. A selection: she performed research about discrete and novel issues that had arisen in cases; she wrote portions of briefs related to a subsidized tenant's appeal under the Homelessness Services Reform Act (HSRA); she assisted with client and applicant interviews and wrote a letter requesting repairs on a tenant's behalf; she wrote a memorandum outlining legal theories that could be used in a putative class action; she assisted with preparation for trials and other evidentiary hearings; and she supported our courthouse-based project about once per week.

Rachel's efforts were instrumental in obtaining a successful result for the client in the aforementioned case; the client prevailed at the administrative review stage, and the agency reinstated her benefits. Throughout the summer, Rachel showed a real passion for our work and enthusiastically took on every project we gave her. Attorneys uniformly praised her work product as thorough and well-written.

Thank you again for your support of Rachel. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at 202-386-6673 or ehenley@legalaiddc.org.

Sincerely,

/s/ Evan Henley

Evan Henley
Staff Attorney