

August 23, 2017

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I worked at Neighborhood Legal Services Program where I was placed in the family law unit. I was given the opportunity to see work on several clients' cases for matters like divorce and custody. Divorce and custody matters are, of course, highly emotional and can get complicated quickly when situations are tense. But, even when parties are congenial and willing to work together, things can get messy. When a client has the money to hire an attorney, it's usually a given that they will get one. However, when clients do not have the money, they tend to proceed *pro se* without the benefit of having someone to help them navigate the judicial system. Custody and divorce are already difficult matters, but proceeding without an attorney makes things that more difficult. The services that Neighborhood Legal Services Program provide are so crucial to helping people achieve the most ideal outcomes in very difficult situations.

My experience at NLSP further affirmed the fact that I want to serve people living in poverty. The fact is that NLSP's clients need access to legal services because legal issues pop up so often in their lives, and they wouldn't have the resources to get legal services without legal aid. What happens without legal aid? People in poverty are taken advantage of by judges, by opposing parties, by corporations, by their friends, by their landlords, and even by the government. Without attorneys, people in poverty navigate very complicated systems without advocates. People who wish to gain or keep custody of their children may not be able to do so

because they did not understand the law well enough to file the correct motions in time. A mother may not receive the correct amount of child support in a court order, a father may overpay on child support, a spouse may fall behind on alimony and never catch up, a father may provide child support for children that are not his. The list of complicated situations is endless. Even with the most understanding and flexible of judges, people appearing *pro se* may walk away without understanding what they've agreed to or what their other options are. I am grateful I was able to be a small part in a large organization that serves communities like NLSP does, providing legal services that are so important. Living in poverty should not restrict a person from having such an important resource.

Sincerely,

Kandin Unger
J.D. Candidate, 2019
The George Washington University Law School