

August 31, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for supporting my summer position at the Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP). NLSP specializes in providing free civil legal services to impoverished DC residents.

During the first week of my fellowship, I received intensive training on the mission of NLSP, the structure of NLSP, and the value of cultural competency at NLSP. We discussed the history of poverty law initiatives in the city. We toured the Deanwood and Kenilworth communities in Ward 7. We learned about the history of the neighborhoods and the current legal issues facing many of the residents in the community. We also visited the NLSP Polk Street office, which is situated in the Deanwood community. We discussed the importance of having legal offices in the communities we serve to ensure that impoverished residents have access to justice.

I worked in the Brief Services Unit located in the Southeast DC NLSP office. I chose the Southeast office because I wanted to work directly within my own community. The Brief Services Unit is the intake hub for NLSP. In the Brief Services Unit, we provided swift legal assistance to clients seeking help with custody, child support, housing, public benefits, wills, and other civil legal issues. I researched DC family law, federal public benefits statutes, DC administrative guidance on public benefits, DC housing law, DC probate law and other sources of law to help evaluate our clients' cases so that they could be provided with legal advice. I met with clients to draft letters and complete legal documents necessary to proceed in their civil legal matters.

One of the first clients that I met with required assistance with completing a Request for Reconsideration after the client was denied Social Security benefits. The meeting lasted over three hours as the client shared integral details regarding her disability and its impact on the client's livelihood. The client needed benefits to support herself and her child. That day, I not only learned the process for appealing Social Security benefits' decisions, but I also learned that our clients have to have a tremendous amount of strength, courage, and fortitude to navigate the process of applying for public benefits.

Another client came into the Southeast office to get assistance regarding a housing matter. This client's unit needed repairs, but her landlord was unresponsive. The client needed assistance articulating her housing complaints especially since the client suffered from a disability that limited her ability to communicate. I assisted the client with

drafting a housing conditions complaint and with identifying possible housing code violations in her unit. The client was grateful for our assistance at NLSP.

I also participated in community outreach events at other DC organizations serving persons in poverty. I visited Southeast Ministry, an organization that provides GED and Basic Adult Education training to residents in Southeast DC. After giving a presentation on the services that NLSP offered, we conducted on-site intake interview. The program participants were grateful that we highlighted legal issues that they were experiencing in their personal lives, and that we came to them to offer legal assistance.

Throughout my summer fellowship, I appreciated the NLSP philosophy that every client deserved legal assistance. This summer I met and spoke with numerous DC residents who would not have had access to legal assistance without NLSP. I value my experiences serving clients at NLSP because I filled a void for persons with legal issues in my community. My summer fellowship at NLSP helped to solidify my commitment to public interest law.

Thank you again for supporting my summer work.

Sincerely,

Rhonesha Buford
The George Washington University Law School
Candidate for Juris Doctor, May 2016