

August 26, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

For the past fourteen weeks, I have had the honor of working at the Bread for the City legal clinic. Bread for the City is a wrap-around service provider, offering medical, social, clothing, legal, and food services to underserved DC residents—a common sense approach to helping the poor that is, unfortunately, not common at all. As Bread for the City's CEO George Jones says, Bread works to help the poor and is committed to working itself out of business. During my time at the legal clinic at Bread, I was privileged to assist countless clients and work with the most talented and compassionate attorneys.

Bread's approach to legal services is very client-centric. Everyone at Bread truly does treat every individual with dignity and respect. As a law clerk at Bread, I was often the first contact for individuals walking in during intakes or during other business hours. On any given week, I was meeting with over twenty clients in person and talking with over thirty on the phone. Some of these interactions were brief, involving legal issues that Bread does not handle, but even those interactions were never futile; at Bread, we never leave clients empty-handed and always attempt to help them in some way, whether it is with one of our other services, or with a referral to a partner organization that is better suited to help them. Some of these interactions led to a more long-term working relationship, allowing me to have the experience of being a part of a legal solution for a client.

Jane Smith had been in an abusive relationship for months. One particular night, the abuse became so violent that she decided she had enough; she grabbed her two-year-old daughter in the middle of the night and escaped to an emergency domestic violence shelter. While at the shelter, she had heard of a place called Bread for the City. Other women in the shelter told her that Bread gives out free diapers to mothers and she should go to the Anacostia office to enroll in the program. Jane used her last remaining dollars to take a bus to Bread's office, in desperate need of some diapers for her uprooted daughter. When she arrived at Bread, she met with a social worker who began the general intake process to gather some information before she could get her diapers. While asking a few questions about her living situation, the social worker discovered that Jane was a domestic violence survivor.

He noticed visible bruises on her arms and asked if Jane would like to meet with one of the lawyers at Bread.

After being escorted just down the hall to the legal clinic, Jane met with me to talk about her situation. I spoke with her about the options available to her and what the attorneys at Bread could do for her. After getting some preliminary information, Jane met with one of Bread's family law attorneys who immediately started planning the process for obtaining a civil protection order. Jane had lost her job and a place to live as a result of the abuse, so we made sure she was signed up for diapers and food, as well as had information about job postings, free cell phones available at Bread, and longer-term housing options. I met with Jane before her civil protection order hearing and we went through her testimony together. A few days before the hearing, Jane confided in us that she discovered she was pregnant and her abuser was the father. My boss, Jane's attorney in the civil protection order proceedings, immediately assured her that the CPO could help keep her and her children safe, and that Bread would help her in the future if custody ever became an issue. At her hearing, Jane received the CPO she requested and later found long-term housing thanks to some serious persistence by my boss at Bread. After everything had been said and done, Jane texted my boss and said that Bread had saved her and her family and that she would be forever grateful.

Stories like Jane's are an everyday occurrence at Bread for the City; I will never cease to be amazed by the extraordinary work that Bread does on a daily basis. I am humbled to have been part of such an astounding team. I have learned so much on both a personal and professional level as a result of Bread's influence. Although I was committed to a public interest legal career before my summer at Bread, I know now that direct legal services is where I absolutely want to begin my career. I thank Equal Justice America for their commitment in funding students like myself who work at organizations like Bread for the City.

With sincere gratitude,

Julia Ward