

September 17, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to express my gratitude to Equal Justice America for supporting me in my Summer 2013 Fellowship as a law clerk at Central Minnesota Legal Services in Minneapolis, Minnesota. My summer position provided me with invaluable opportunities to develop my legal skills, serve low-income clients with critical legal needs, and learn more about public interest career opportunities.

As a law clerk at Central Minnesota Legal Services, I was certified as a Student Attorney and was able to represent low-income clients in court hearings under attorney supervision. One of the most memorable experiences of my summer involved representing a victim of domestic violence as she sought an Order for Protection to ensure her safety. Our client faced significant cultural and financial obstacles in getting the help she needed, and our office was able to provide much-needed support. After a two-day trial, our client obtained the Order for Protection and temporary custody rights of her young son. At trial, my role was to conduct the direct examination for our client. Giving her the opportunity to present her story to the judge gave me a sense of the power of legal advocacy on behalf of individuals with limited access to the courts. Our office has continued to represent this client as she seeks permanent custody, and I feel fortunate to have given her such meaningful help to start this process.

Along with this experience, I also developed relationships with several clients seeking assistance with challenging family law issues such as third-party visitation requests and divorce proceedings following a history of domestic violence. One of my clients had received permanent physical disabilities as a result of abuse and was attempting to deal with ongoing medical issues alongside her family law case. Another client was forced by domestic abuse to flee her home along with her minor children. At the

same time as she was seeking our help for her family law matter, she was also working hard to find safe and stable housing for her family in a time of critical need. My experiences representing these clients showed me the importance of devoting consistent time to in-depth legal research, writing, and fact investigation while also paying attention to clients' immediate and urgent needs.

My Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship has shown me many ways that I can use my legal career to advance equal to access justice. Our office dealt with a range of issues including not only family law matters, but also landlord-tenant disputes and public benefits cases. We also consulted with public interest attorneys serving clients with issues in consumer law, immigration, child advocacy, and elder law. All of the attorneys that I met over the summer displayed a fervent passion for their work and a dedication to providing high quality services for low-income clients. Working in an environment alongside these attorneys gave me a similar passion to continue doing this important work on behalf of clients in need.

Thank you again for supporting me in this opportunity. I feel so fortunate to have had this position the summer after my first year of law school, and I look forward to contributing my legal skills to equal justice through similar opportunities in the future.

Sincerely,

Julia Zwak
University of Minnesota Law School
J.D. Candidate, Class of 2015