

8 Forest St #6  
Cambridge, MA 02140

September 5, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

As the recipient of a 2007 Equal Justice America Fellowship, I spent this past summer working as a student attorney at the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau in Cambridge, Massachusetts. During my three months at the Bureau, I worked in the areas of family law and public benefits. My assignments included a divorce case that began trial in late August, an appeal of a denial of unemployment benefits, which I argued before a hearing officer and subsequently won, and two Social Security benefits cases. I also assisted on a custody case that went to trial in late July and in preparing to appeal a divorce judgment granted earlier this year.

Before law school, I spent two years working for a large private firm as a litigation assistant. My practical experience there proved valuable in the public interest realm while simultaneously reinforcing how different the two worlds of practice are. I am grateful to have had the experience of working at the Legal Aid Bureau because it exposed me to those areas in which I lacked first-hand experience at the private firm level. At the Bureau, I was the primary contact for our clients. Fellow student attorneys and I worked under the supervision of licensed attorneys, who acted as mentors and instructors in our overall cases but left us free, for the most part, to conduct the day-to-day operations of the case as we saw fit. I met with clients, formulated strategies, drafted discovery requests, and interacted with opposing counsel, the court, and third parties involved in my cases. I wrote dozens of motions of every kind, from the simplest motions to preclude to a complex motion to disqualify opposing counsel.

My experience in public interest gave me a unique perspective on what it truly means to practice law. Like many public interest organizations we had no paralegals or secretaries, and so the student attorneys wore multiple hats. I often found myself drafting a motion in the morning and rushing to file it before four pm that afternoon, trying to balance my concern with the substance of the document with the need to comply with all the minutiae of Massachusetts court rules. As exasperating as the experience could sometimes be, I had to appreciate the understanding it gave me of the legal process as a whole. It also ensured that I will always be very appreciative of paralegals and support staff with whom I work in the future!

The most rewarding part of the experience, besides the chance to learn from some of the best and most committed public interest lawyers I've had the privilege to meet, was the opportunity to work with the clients themselves. Without exception, my clients were wonderful and deserving people. I consider it a cliché in the public interest world that "everyone deserves adequate representation," but this experience taught me how true that can be. From the single mother who

got herself off drugs and turned her life around, now fighting for custody of her children, to the woman who had eight dollars in her bank account when I met her, fired from her job for what essentially amounted to having had an "off day," they were earnest and sincere and most of all, they were thankful that they wouldn't have to face the court system alone. Even as a student at one of the country's best law schools, I was wracked with nervousness every time I walked into the courtroom. I can only imagine what it must be like to walk in alone, with no training, no knowledge of the system and with everything you hold dear – your children, your family, your home – potentially on the line.

Meeting these clients, and advocating on their behalf, made me truly aware of the important place that public interest law holds in our society. I hope that those who make these services available to people in need continue to recognize how high the stakes are, and how great the reward can be - not only for the recipients of this assistance, but for those who have had the honor to be of service as well.

I thank you for your assistance, not only in funding my endeavor into public interest, but in furthering the cause of public interest law generally, and wish your organization continued success in the future – so much depends on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kara B. Roseen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kara B. Roseen  
Harvard Law School  
Class of 2009