

August 27, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I wanted to thank you and Equal Justice America for helping to support my work this summer with the Housing Group at the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago. I had the opportunity this summer to do a broad range of work, including litigation, legal research, client intake, and presentations of new cases at case acceptance meetings. I felt very positive about my work because I knew that my efforts were helping people living in poverty to keep decent, safe and affordable housing. I was also exposed to a variety of legal housing issues, including eviction from subsidized housing, disability accommodation, and housing protection for seniors, veterans, and people living with HIV/AIDS. I feel so fortunate that EJA gave me the financial help I needed so I could do this important work.

One of the highlights of my summer was being able to represent one of LAF's clients at an administrative hearing before the Chicago Housing Authority. Our client was faced with having her subsidized housing voucher terminated because she failed to report her son's arrest for misdemeanor battery to the CHA. To prepare for the hearing I wrote up Direct Examination questions for our client and her son, and went over those questions with each of them separately before the hearing. I also called our client's landlord to see if he would be willing to testify on our client's behalf, which he gladly agreed to do. I also closely reviewed the police reports from our client's son's arrest, as well as other documents from the CHA's file on our client in order to see what evidence the opposing counsel might present at the hearing. Finally, I wrote a hearing memo detailing the legal bases and case law supporting our client's defense, and prepared opening and closing statements.

At the actual hearing, I was very happy with the testimony of my client, her son, and her landlord because their responses to my questions revealed the important facts I wanted the hearing officer to consider. These included the fact that my client had been an exemplary Section 8 voucher-holder and tenant for over 16 years; that she did not intentionally withhold important information from the CHA; that she misunderstood what counted as "criminal activity" according to the CHA; and that her son's aggressive behavior on the day of his arrest stemmed in large part from the fact that he had just discovered the same day that his father was dying of pancreatic cancer. All of those mitigating circumstances must have come across well because I found out this week that the hearing officer decided to reinstate our client's housing voucher!

I was delighted when my supervisor emailed me to share the good news that we had won the hearing. I realized with satisfaction that my internship with LAF this summer allowed me to start doing as a 1L what I came to law school to do: to actually help people.

I am very grateful to Equal Justice America for offering to provide financial support to people like myself who are dedicated to public interest law. I believe this summer is just my first step in what will hopefully be a long legal career working on behalf of those who cannot afford the costs of legal services but who have pressing legal needs. Thank you very much, again, for your support.

Sincerely,

Kayla Higgins

Chicago-Kent College of Law, Class of 2016



Equal justice starts here.

September 1, 2014

Dan Ruben
Building II - Suite 204
13540 E. Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112
Via email to katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

Re: Kayla Higgins

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing with my evaluation of Kayla Higgins. Kayla worked for me this summer as a law student intern. I supervised most of her work, though she did also do some work for other attorneys in our practice group, which I did not directly supervise.

Kayla worked on a variety of tasks this summer. She drafted several substantive motions and discovery. She also conducted an administrative hearing regarding termination of a client's housing subsidy before a local housing authority. This involved gathering evidence, interviewing and preparing the client, and preparing direct examination questions and opening and closing arguments. (We found out after her internship ended that we won the hearing.) She also conducted numerous intake interviews with new clients (typically 4 interviews each week) and presented cases at our weekly case acceptance meetings.

Kayla showed a real commitment to the work we do. She was really invested in learning as much as she could this summer. She observed court hearings on numerous occasions and went on several home visits. She also did some trial preparation work for one of my colleagues (the trial ended up getting continued). She observed some depositions and helped prepare deposition questions. She did several substantive research projects for me and other attorneys.

Kayla also actively sought out constructive criticism on all aspects of her performance this summer. She genuinely wanted to do a good job and is committed to working in the field of public interest law in the future. Kayla provided significant support to our team of attorneys this summer. I wish her all the best in the future. Please contact me at the number below if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lea A. Weems
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