

August 30, 2008

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I spent my summer at the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau ('HLAB') working on a variety of cases involving housing law. My cases involved fault evictions, non-payment evictions and post-foreclosure evictions. My work ranged from helping my clients secure necessary repairs to negotiating settlement agreements for them. I found my work challenging but rewarding, as I was able to help many people feel comfortable and secure in their living situations.

The highlight of my summer was working with Mr. C., an individual who was being evicted from his rooming house because the landlord alleged that he had violated the terms of a previous Agreement for Judgment. Mr. C had been referred to HLAB from the Tenant Preservation Project and I met him while participating in Lawyer for the Day at the Boston Housing Court. Mr. C had a number of health issues that severely impacted his day to day living. Mr. C suffered from cerebral palsy, severe vertigo and depression. Due to these numerous health issues, Mr. C., more than anything, needed to feel secure in his living situation. If he was evicted, his only option was to move out of state to live with his parents, losing the care of his many doctors in the area.

After two days of cross-examination of the landlord's property manager and another witness, the Judge called us sidebar and encouraged both sides to enter into an amended Agreement for Judgment. We were able to negotiate an agreement that allowed Mr. C to remain in his apartment, while addressing the Landlord's concerns. Unlike his first time negotiating an agreement, this time Mr. C was represented by counsel and because of that his interests were more adequately represented and the agreement was better suited to address Mr. C's needs.

Mr. C's story, unfortunately, is not rare, but is representative of many of HLAB's clients. Without the work of HLAB or organizations just like it, many of these individuals, like Mr. C would go unrepresented and risk losing their homes. Thanks to Equal Justice America, I was able to work at HLAB for the summer and be a part of all its great work. This summer I was not only able to gain a significant amount of legal experience, but I was able to help others, which was the most rewarding experience of all.

Sincerely,

Kristin Webster
Boston College Law School
Class of 2010