

# Lauren Coleman

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September 18, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I worked as a law clerk for Disability Rights Advocates (DRA). DRA is a non-profit legal center with the mission of advancing the rights of people with all types of disabilities nationwide. My work for DRA consisted of assisting attorneys litigating class action lawsuits on behalf of individuals with disabilities. Throughout the summer, I worked on a variety of cases representing individuals with different types of disabilities. I also was given the opportunity to draft legal memoranda, a demand letter, preliminary settlement agreement language, and portions of a motion for preliminary injunction.

The most memorable case I worked on involved representing youth with disabilities who are detained in juvenile hall. I made several trips to juvenile hall with one of my supervising attorneys to interview juveniles about their conditions of confinement and access to education. For two particular clients, I was able to conduct interviews, review documents, and draft declarations. I also incorporated information I gathered from these two clients into the section of a motion for preliminary injunction I drafted addressing why the preliminary injunction would support the public good. Both clients appreciated our representation and felt like we provided them with the rare opportunity to be heard while in the juvenile justice system.

My experiences working with these two clients highlighted the importance of public interest work. Because the clients were minors, I often communicated with their parents to coordinate visits and interviews. Their parents were extremely thankful that DRA was advocating on behalf of their children because they would not have been able to finance the cost of a lawyer to address the injustices their children experienced through their contact with the juvenile justice system. If DRA had not stepped in to remedy the injustices in the juvenile hall, they may have continued to affect youth with disabilities in the future. While I immediately understood the tangible relief the lawsuit could provide to our clients, through my work with these clients, I also realized the intangible benefits non-profit legal representation provides. Our clients and their parents seemed gratified by the fact that someone was willing to listen to their stories let alone work to correct the problems they described in the juvenile justice system.

I originally came to law school with the goal of assisting individuals with disabilities navigate the intricacies of the legal system and have dedicated much of time while in law

school to working with non-profit organizations that work to advance the rights of individuals with disabilities. The Equal Justice America Fellowship enabled me to continue providing legal services to indigent individuals with disabilities this summer. I am now committed to pursuing a public interest career after graduation with a government agency or non-profit organization and I hope to use my law degree to eliminate barriers to accessibility that make having a disability an obstacle rather than a single facet of a complete person.

Sincerely,

Lauren Coleman  
J.D. Candidate, Class of 2015  
UC Hastings College of the Law