

May 28, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for supporting my work as an Equal Justice America fellow this spring in the Housing Program at Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLSEPA). CLSEPA has been an important fixture in my law school experience since I began volunteering there during the fall of my 1L year. I was grateful for the opportunity to get more deeply involved as a part-time fellow.

The Housing Program at CLSEPA provides consultation, referrals, and brief services for low-income residents with housing-related legal issues in and around East Palo Alto, CA. My work involved following up with clients as well as conducting intake interviews, writing memoranda for attorneys, and writing demand letters to landlords. I also worked with my supervising attorney, Jeanne Merino, to revise Program handbooks and client intake forms.

One of our clients was seeking the return of a security deposit, which her former landlord was withholding based on charges for which the client should not have been responsible under the lease. Under the supervision of a CLSEPA attorney, Daniel Saver, I drafted a letter to the client's landlord contesting the charges the landlord had asserted. While this was a smaller project for me, it was incredibly satisfying. Our client was energetic and organized, particularly in helping us gather documentation to support her case. For her, it was a matter of pride: she and the landlord had previously disputed several other issues related to her tenancy and she was committed to resolving this final disagreement. While I only worked on the case in its early stages, the initial demand letter paved the way for settlement discussions with the landlord. I enjoyed working with such a responsive client, and I was glad we could help her assert her rights as a tenant.

My experience with CLSEPA has strengthened my desire to work for the public good and to engage in service projects in the communities surrounding Stanford. I hope you will continue to provide other SLS students and CLSEPA volunteers with the similar opportunities for support.

Sincerely,

Nikki Leon,
J.D. Candidate, Class of 2016
Stanford Law School