

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

August 30, 2015

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I spent the summer at the Austin Office of the Chicago Legal Clinic. This office assists clients with family law matters, as well as with sealing and expungement of criminal records. I learned a lot about both of these areas by working on a number of cases with the Clinic's attorneys and other summer interns.

The family law cases I worked on included dissolution and parentage cases in different stages of litigation. Thus, although the summer was too short for me to follow a single case from the very first pleading to the final judgment, I was able to observe all the different stages a dissolution case or a parentage one might go through. For the pleadings stage, I prepared all the documents that needed to be filed, including first drafts of petitions and responses. During the discovery stage, I helped clients fill out their financial disclosure statements that had to be exchanged with their adverse party. Moreover, I prepared subpoenas and responses to requests to produce documents. For uncontested divorces, I prepared prove-up documents. I also worked on settlement agreements and proposed judgments for contested cases. Throughout the summer, I researched property and child support issues.

Furthermore, every Thursday, I interviewed a number of people who had petitioned for either sealing or expungement of their criminal records. These interviews had two goals: to prepare the petitioner for her hearing (that would typically occur minutes after the interview ended), and to take notes that would distill the petitioner's history to help a Clinic's attorney represent her during the hearing. Thursday afternoons were often hectic and always exciting.

Equally exciting was probably the largest project I worked on over the summer—drafting a clemency petition. From a purely writing perspective, this task was both challenging and immensely interesting because a petition should be a first-person narrative that preserves the client's voice as much as possible. The need to be persuasive was the only similarity between drafting this petition and all other legal documents I had prepared, whether at Northwestern or at the Clinic. Most importantly, however, I enjoyed preparing this clemency petition because I was grateful for the opportunity to help the client, "Cathy," tell her story to the Illinois Prisoner Review Board and the Governor. Cathy's story was, I thought, truly compelling. She had overcome a difficult childhood and a bad marriage to raise great kids and be a stellar college student. It did not seem fair that a single battery conviction from her teens might prevent her from getting a better job or entering the legal field. While it will probably take a couple of years for Cathy's petition to be decided on, I am hopeful that it will be granted.

I thoroughly enjoyed my summer at the Clinic. Not only was the office a truly supportive environment conducive to learning, but it was also incredibly rewarding to see my work—both on family law cases and on preparing petitioners for their sealing and expungement hearings—have a positive impact on someone's life. Thank you for helping make this experience possible.

Sincerely,

Tomislava Dragicevic  
Northwestern Law, Class of 2017