

September 13, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Over the summer I was able to utilize my Equal Justice America Summer 2015 Fellowship to work at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) in their General Legal Services - Economic Justice Clinic. New York Legal Assistance Group provides a wide range of free civil legal services to low-income clients. The Economic Justice Clinic deals primarily with entitlement programs such as food stamps, shelter allowances, cash allowances, Medicaid, Social Security and Medicare; it is staffed by law students from St. John's University School of Law and Brooklyn Law School during the academic school year and it is supervised by attorneys.

At the beginning of my internship, I was given materials to better understand the structure of the Federal, State and Local entitlement programs as well as the Administrative Hearings that can have adverse effects on our client's benefits. At NYLAG, I was able to interact directly with clients, maintaining clients' information as well as the statuses of their cases in case management software. I learned how to identify legal issues when speaking with clients and how to advocate on their behalf. I attended administrative hearings to preserve our client's benefits.

I was also given the opportunity to perform community outreach at NYLAG's help desk at the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Administrative Hearings building in Brooklyn, listening to and giving information and referrals to clients. NYLAG also had CLE

trainings that were open to any of the summer interns which I took advantage of and was able to learn about other legal topics such as housing, consumer protection and immigration law.

Through the course of my ten weeks of interning at NYLAG, I learned many invaluable lessons. In interviewing one client, I found out she was being garnished for student debt from loans she took out several decades ago. This debt affected her ability to pay her electricity bill as she was living on a modest fixed income. This client was also blind and with some help from my supervising attorney and NYLAG's student loan division, I found out she may be eligible for a loan forgiveness due to her total and permanent disability. Due the caseload in the Student loan division they could not take on the case but I was shown how to apply for a student loan discharge and proceeded to get the process in motion for our client. In the course of that same case, I also learned how to negotiate our client's bills to prevent a disruption of her utility services.

During my internship at NYLAG, I worked under the supervision of very passionate and competent attorneys and paralegals whom I was able to network and build professional relationships with. I highly recommend anyone who is looking for experience in public interest law to apply to NYLAG, whether in their Economic Justice Clinic or in any of their other legal units. I am very appreciative of the Equal Justice America's Summer Fellowship Program for helping to make this past summer a rewarding experience.

Very Truly Yours,

Tristan I. Pollard
J.D. Candidate
St. John's University School of Law
Class of 2015