

August 30, 2017

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to say thank you for providing funds to support my summer work with the Community Economic Justice Clinic at the East Bay Community Law Center. My work this summer on sustainable economic development cemented my desire to pursue a career in the field. I know that my mind would have strayed from the work if I had to request emergency loans from the law school to fund the second half of my summer; the Equal Justice America Fellowship I received kept that anxiety at bay.

Oddly enough, it was that anxiety—housing anxiety—that occupied much of my time at work this summer. Through the Community Economic Justice Clinic (“CEJ”) I worked on affordable housing policy drafts and advocated for housing solutions for low-income individuals. One of the strengths of CEJ is its connection to the Housing Clinic of the East Bay Community Law Center. This enabled me to listen to the stories of low-income tenants at the same time I was working on policies to help low-income tenants. These particularities were extremely helpful in grounding the policy work I did this summer. This insistence on concretizing what can often be abstract policy discussions will remain with me.

What also remains for me is an insistence on making the law understandable for low-income entrepreneurs. This summer I worked extensively with community-oriented businesses. One in particular required extensive legal help due to making several decisions in the early stages of business development without the assistance of lawyers. Although our aim in working

with this client was to put out fires and bring the business into compliance, we also aimed to empower the client to feel comfortable making future business decisions. Therefore, I made it a goal not to worry about extending meetings beyond their allotted time frame. This was a way to ensure there was no pressure to handle the client rather than empowering the client through relatable discussion.

Making legal jargon relatable was one of the key facets of another project I worked on this summer, a know-your-rights training for system-involved young women. An objective of this training was to involve the young women in the development and presentation of the know-your-rights training. It was an amazing experience working with young women to understand legal concepts and specifically how those legal concepts related to their experience and could inform their future opportunities. This was a learning experience I will not forget.

Thank you again for funding my summer with the Community Economic Justice. You have helped start a career spent serving and empowering low-income communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Cumberland". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jay Cumberland

University of California, Berkeley, School of Law
Class of 2019