

August 31, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thanks to my Equal Justice America Fellowship, I was able to spend my summer working at the East Bay Children's Law Offices (EBCLO) in Oakland, California. EBCLO is a nonprofit that represents foster children in juvenile dependency proceedings. Juvenile representation in dependency proceedings is essential because it gives children a voice in the legal proceedings that ultimately decide where and with whom the child is going to live. It is important that children feel they are part of this process, and that they feel that someone is advocating on their behalf.

As part of my internship, I worked with children of all ages—from infancy to young adults in the AB-12 extended foster care program. My responsibilities included checking in with clients before their court dates so my supervisor or I was able to advocate for their wishes. This might mean advocating for a change of placement, perhaps advocating for a client to return to the care of a parent, or for a child to remain in foster care. Sometimes, this meant advocating for other things that our clients needed, such as specific health care needs or a new bicycle. I visited many children in their homes where I observed their daily environment, spoke with their caregiver, and most importantly, checked in with the child and/or young adult themselves. While my younger clients were not very reflective about the experience of having a lawyer, my older clients often expressed their gratitude in having a person who they felt was listening to them and who was their advocate.

In addition to checking in with children before court dates, I worked on several longer projects, including drafting closing arguments for trial and a motion to amend a restraining order. These projects required more extensive legal research and several rounds of editing. I was not able to be present for the final trial decision, but recently received a phone call from both my client and my supervisor, letting me know that the judge had decided in my client's favor. Through my experiences in juvenile court, both from this summer and before, I have worked on many cases that felt like losing battles. Winning this particular trial—which was an uphill battle—after so much hard work, was an incredible feeling. I know I will never forget hearing my client's excited voice as she told me the decision. And, I know that I will remember this experience when I am working on other "uphill battles" in my future career.

My summer internship also provided me with invaluable training and supervision as I pursue my own career in child advocacy. I was able to appear in court as a certified law student in order to directly advocate for my clients. I got first-hand experience in the type of law I want to pursue, while under the supervision of an attorney who had practiced in the field for many years. And I not only improved my research, writing, and oral advocacy skills, but was able to develop some of the specific skills I will need for a career in child advocacy in the Bay Area—such as balancing a

large caseload, working with parents, mediating cases to avoid trial, and how to tap into community resources. Public interest lawyers do not have much time to train once they start working; there is simply too much need and too little time. I know that this summer will allow me to jump right into a caseload once I am a practicing attorney.

My summer would not have been possible without the Equal Justice America Fellowship. My host organization is a nonprofit and is unable to pay legal interns. And given the cost of law school, I could not have accepted a summer internship without a summer stipend. I am now entering my last year of law school, feeling even more confident and excited about my plans to pursue a career in child advocacy. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely yours,

*Lauren Gleason*

Lauren Gleason  
J.D. Candidate '17  
University of California, Berkeley School of Law



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

August 19, 2016

Susan Walsh  
Interim Executive Director

Kristin Mateer  
Managing Attorney

C. Joy Ricardo  
Managing Attorney

Carol Barnett  
Director of Training

Peggy Stone  
Director of Interns and  
Volunteer Attorneys

Ana Wong  
Director of Finance  
and Operations

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Siegel  
Chairperson

Sheri Schoenberg  
Secretary

Norbert Ralph, PhD, MPH  
Treasurer

Tess Chandler

Patricia Lee

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I had the pleasure of supervising Lauren Gleason during the summer of 2016 when she was a law clerk with East Bay Children's Law Offices (EBCLO). EBCLO is a non-profit agency dedicated to representing the foster youth of Alameda County. Our client base is a diverse and vibrant population. Working with foster youth is both rewarding and demanding; it requires working with a variety of people including professionals with divergent views. Moreover, because foster care law is relatively new and evolving, the work requires creative legal analysis. The work also demands having compassion and thoughtfulness when working with and advocating on behalf of this disenfranchised population.

Ms. Gleason took to the work immediately. She was able to engage with the clients easily and had a keen sense of the complex life histories many of the youth had faced. She was able to communicate effectively with them. Additionally, Ms. Gleason quickly grasped many of the nuances of the law as it relates to foster youth and conducted thoughtful legal research. In one area of analysis, Ms. Gleason did an excellent job: the area of minors who themselves become parents while in the foster care system. The acknowledgment that minor parents in the foster care system face unique challenges is a newly developing area of child welfare law and Ms. Gleason assisted me greatly in exploring this uncharted territory. Her legal research was thorough and her analysis well-reasoned.

In addition to her excellent skills in legal research and writing, Ms. Gleason was a pleasure to have in the office: she was easy to work with, asked appropriate questions, and brought a positive 'ready to work' attitude to the office each day.

Sincerely,

Carol Barnett  
Staff Attorney / Director of Training