

August 19, 2016

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

**Re: 2016 Summer Funding**

Dear Mr. Ruben:

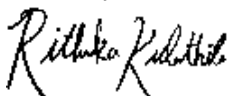
It is my sincere pleasure to thank you for awarding me with a fellowship to support my work at East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) this summer. During this past summer I worked in EBCLC's Health and Welfare unit conducting legal research, advising clients, negotiating with appeals officers and above all, advocating on behalf of our clients. We received referrals through EBCLC's innovative medical-legal partnership, which improved good health outcomes by addressing social determinants of health. Additionally, the Health and Welfare Unit organized a weekly "Public Benefits and Justice" clinic for clients to come in and ask questions about County and/or federal benefits.

During the summer, I worked with a client to get County benefits that she was eligible for but was not receiving. We were able to secure a judgment that gave our client benefits going forward and also retroactive benefits. This was particularly important because our client had an outstanding medical bill that would now be covered with her new Medi-Cal benefits. Our client's case taught me how important the language of a regulation is. Depending on whether a client is half-time or full-time student can determine whether the client is eligible for CalFresh benefits and Medi-Cal. But who defines these terms? The regulations state the school should dictate but what happens if the school's metrics are different than the average school's? This metric effects who can be counted as part of the household, which impacts whether a family is eligible for benefits. Our client's case taught me a lot about looking very closely at the language of the regulations and trying to find the ambiguity in the definitions.

In another case, I worked with client undergoing a CDR and possible termination of her Social Security benefits. I worked very closely with her analyst on the case trying to provide the analyst with any medical records, and medical reports from doctors. In doing so, I learned negotiation skills to persuade the analyst that our client was still disabled and could not work. Additionally, I learned that "the squeaky wheel gets the oil". You need to be constantly following up with busy medical offices, otherwise it is hard to collect medical records and to receive CDR-related forms from busy medical practitioners. Ultimately, we were able to secure a favorable outcome for a client without having to go to hearing.

This summer was an incredible experience and I thank you for helping support my work at EBCLC. I was mentored by amazing attorneys who took the time to teach me and help me grow into an advocate. While we may not always secure favorable outcomes for our clients, we try our very best to advocate as best as we can! I learned the meaning of perseverance while working at EBCLC and am deeply appreciative to have had an opportunity to work there over the summer. Thank you for supporting my work and growth as an advocate through this fellowship.

Sincerely,



Rithika Kulathila

J.D. Candidate, 2018

University of California, Berkeley School of Law