

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

August 24, 2017

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to thank you and Equal Justice America for providing me with an Equal Justice America fellowship. It granted me the opportunity to do my summer internship at the University of Michigan Law School's Child Advocacy Law Clinic without having to worry about how I would manage to pay my bills. This summer I saw with my own eyes just how important it is for our society to provide legal assistance to everyone, not just those who can afford it, and you help make that a possibility.

At the Child Advocacy Law Clinic (CALC), student attorneys typically represent children in various foster care proceedings. I acted as Lawyer-Guardian ad Litem for several children who had been removed from their parents' care due to abuse or neglect. I was in charge of determining what course of action was in the best interest of each child, and then vigorously advocated for those interests to be met on behalf of the children.

In one case, the Michigan Department of Human Health and Services (DHHS) caseworker was uncertain of how to handle a child who had run away from home several times and had become a victim of human trafficking. The caseworker was afraid the child would run away again if not placed in a secure facility, even though she had completed treatment and the mental health professionals felt she was ready to be discharged and go home with her father. While the caseworker acted out of concern for the child, her desire to keep the child under lock and key with no end in sight was in conflict with what we believed was in the best interests of the child. After we presented the facts of the case and pointed out the amazing progress the child had made, the court agreed with us that the child needed to go back to living in a normal environment. After a transition period, the child is finally living with her father again. She is now doing very well, has joined a sports club, and is continuing mental health treatment to ensure she remains on the right track. It is incredible to know that I helped return normality and stability to this child's life, whereas otherwise she might still be stuck in that facility, only allowed to see her father for an hour or two each week.

CALC sometimes represents adults in foster care proceedings as well. In one case, a grandmother had been taking care of two of her grandchildren for the entirety of their lives and wished to obtain guardianship over them. Without the legal system acknowledging her as the caretaker of the children, the grandmother struggled on her meager income, unable to take them to medical appointments or apply for food stamps for them. The mother of the children loved them, but was incapable of providing for their needs as necessary. We helped the grandmother with completing the required forms, filed them with the court, and then represented her at the

hearing. When the court granted her guardianship, the grandmother was delighted and nearly in tears; she would finally be able to take care of her grandchildren properly. When so many cases we see at CALC involve parents who have been abusive towards or neglecting of their children, it is refreshing and heartwarming to see a relative voluntarily step up to the task of providing these children with the best childhoods possible. I am grateful I got to play a role in making that happen.

Many of the cases I worked on are still a work in progress, but knowing that I have already begun to make an impact on clients' lives is amazing. Appearing in front of a judge or referee and advocating for my clients was a wonderful experience, and I very much look forward to continuing to do so. Working at CALC has made me feel more confident and capable, like I can become the lawyer that I have always wanted to be, and I am truly grateful for your assistance in making this happen.

Sincerely,

Jana De Moyer  
Juris Doctor Candidate, May 2019  
University of Michigan Law School