

August 29, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

In my summer fellowship at Disability Rights Texas (DRTx), I got the opportunity to work on a variety of legal projects across diverse areas of the law. I was able to work on various projects that helped clients secure legal rights or the benefits they were entitled to, and I learned a lot about substantive areas of the law that affect individuals with disabilities.

I assisted in the preparation of a client's appeal of an administrative hearing related to employment discrimination based on the client's disability. I reviewed the transcript of the hearing, summarized the most helpful parts of the testimony that was provided, and conducted additional research about relevant regulations that had recently changed. I found my work on the client's appeal to be rewarding because it was in an effort to help the client to be able to achieve the career he had dreamed of having for many years.

I also assisted in preparing for a number of Medicaid Fair Hearings, where Medicaid services to children with severe disabilities had been denied or reduced. I participated in calls to the client's parents, who explained how severely they were impacted by a lack of access to Medicaid services that helped them care for children who often needed 24-hour care. I served the clients by drafting hearing questions, reviewing Medicaid assessment tools, and obtaining physicians' letters attesting to the disability-related needs of the clients. Witnessing how arbitrarily so many of the Medicaid decisions were, combined with how critically the clients depended on the services made my work feel all the more compelling.

Some of the most exciting parts of my fellowship involved visits with children in foster care who had disabilities. I accompanied their attorney ad litem to review hearings in court, as well as to visits with the children themselves in juvenile detention centers, residential treatment centers, and psychiatric hospitals. Getting to see how the children were able (or unable) to access therapy, educational services, and visits with their families helped me to appreciate the importance of the advocacy work their attorneys did for them in court.

I also visited a state supported living center and a juvenile correctional facility, where I met with attorneys and their clients, saw how attorneys advocated for their clients' interests in treatment meetings, and witnessed the ways that attorneys conducted monitoring of such state facilities to ensure that people with disabilities were not being abused or deprived of their rights. I found these visits to be quite eye-opening, because of the nature and restrictiveness of the facilities, and how difficult it was for clients to leave the facilities for less restrictive environments, even when circumstances appeared to merit such a change. I realized that the public is often unaware that

facilities like state supported living centers exist, and even more ignorant of the reasons why individuals with disabilities might be confined there with little recourse to obtain greater freedom in the community.

I found my summer experience at DRTx to be highly rewarding, insightful, and engaging. I enjoyed getting to see the client-centered work that DRTx attorneys did, and it was a wonderful opportunity to explore so many different areas of the law. I particularly enjoyed the work I did on healthcare and employment issues, but I found the visits to state facilities to be some of the most compelling work I witnessed. I would highly recommend spending a summer at DRTx to other law students, and I would seriously consider working at the agency after graduation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Marissa Latta". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and connected.

Marissa Latta
The University of Texas School of Law, Class of 2018

Via Email Only

August 9, 2016

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

Re: Evaluation of Marissa Latta's Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben:

As Marissa Latta's co-supervisor this past summer, I understand that I am to provide you with an evaluation of her fellowship. I am pleased to report that it was a great success. Marissa was a pleasure to work with and supervise: she was extremely committed and interested in her projects, our clients, our mission, and public interest law, and her presence and work product helped our attorneys and our clients immensely. Marissa worked on about 16 projects this summer, including:

Assisting a young client whose attendant hours have been wrongfully reduced by Texas Medicaid; for this project, Marissa interviewed the client's mother, then drafted letters of medical necessity for the client's physician and the client's mother's physician; she also drafted a letter to the fair hearings officer compelling the production of the child's Medicaid case file;

Assisting another child who is being denied a medically necessary minor home modification; for this project, Marissa drafted a letter of medical necessity for the child's specialist, and drafted direct exam questions for the hearing;

Drafting a memorandum on a conflict of interest question, a memorandum on Texas Medicaid's failure and refusal to make its fair hearing decisions available to the public cost-free, and a memorandum on the issue of ride-sharing companies and accessibility;

Researching the question of the scope of injunctive relief in cases where the problem is systemic, but the case is brought by individuals (as opposed to by a class);

Drafting a bill of rights for residents of boarding homes; and

Summarizing an administrative hearing transcript for use on appeal.

I believe that Marissa has a bright future in public interest law. Based on our experience with Marissa, and those clerks who have preceded her, Disability Rights Texas would welcome the opportunity to host other fellows in the future.

Thank you so much making these fellowships available. I believe they are invaluable to both the student and the organization. If you have any other questions, please email or call me at 512.407.2745.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Hofer", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Hofer
Senior Litigation Attorney