

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

One of the simplest, but most impactful experiences I had this summer could be described as a simple errand to the Daley Center in Chicago. But it was far more than that—I had the opportunity to hand deliver notice of a motion to vacate an order of possession—a declaration of eviction—to stop the sheriff's department from forcibly removing my client from her home. My client had arrived for an intake with a crumpled-up notice to evict, and told me she'd missed her court date for medical reasons, and so an automatic order of possession had been entered against her. That day everything else fell off of my to-do list—I hustled alongside a staff attorney to collect her affidavit and write and file a motion to vacate the order. The next morning, I proudly walked over to the Daley Center, in my hand tangible evidence of a lawyer's ability to help real people.

My summer at Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing was devoted to protecting tenants facing eviction and other housing issues. Much of my work involved counseling clients, either briefly during an intake interview, or more thoroughly as a part of LCBH's Tenants in Foreclosure helpline. Over the summer I had the chance to meet tenants in all types of situations—those with leases they believed to be invalid, those facing eviction due to landlord retaliation, those who lived in foreclosed buildings who were now being ignored by the new owners—and it was an honor to get to serve them and help guide them through the legal process surrounding housing in Chicago.

As a law student, I felt especially honored to gain the trust of so many of my clients. I had one client facing a difficult situation with a landlord, and because I had been able to gain his trust by being open and transparent with him through all of our phone conversations, when the point came where there were no more legal remedies available to him, I was able to have that frank conversation with him, and he trusted that I wasn't trying to manipulate him or get rid of him, but was only being honest. I also had the opportunity to assist a couple of clients in writing the complaints for lawsuits against their landlords for a variety of tenant-landlord law violations, and the two opportunities I had to sit across the table from a client and read them the complaint I'd written on their behalf was exceptionally meaningful. To have a client say "yes, that's exactly what happened," and to understand that this written complaint was proof that I, alongside the staff at LCBH, intended to do everything I could to help find justice for the client invigorated my desire to pursue public interest law.

Outside of direct client work, one project that I am particularly proud of is a suite of form pleadings that I worked on. My task was to create a tenant-friendly guide to surviving an eviction pro se. I wrote a handful of form pleadings and accompanying instruction guides, and the hope is that those pleadings, if approved by the court, will be able to assist the many tenants who are facing eviction but can't access services through a legal aid organization.

This summer was an experience that I will carry with me for the rest of my legal career. I witnessed firsthand what a difference a lawyer can make to an individual in crisis, and that is precisely the kind of lawyer I want to be.

Thank you and everyone at Equal Justice America for helping make this opportunity possible. It was the greatest first law job I could have imagined for myself.

Sincerely,

Miles Walser  
University of Wisconsin Law Student  
Graduating in 2019