

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to start this letter by saying thank you to Equal Justice America. Without EJA's generosity, I would not have been able to gain worthwhile legal experience while helping those most vulnerable in our population this summer at Central Virginia Legal Aid in Charlottesville, Virginia. Not only did we help those in need in Charlottesville, but we also helped those in need throughout Central Virginia.

On my first day at Central Virginia Legal Aid, I hit the ground running. I was assigned about five cases in which it was my responsibility to talk to the clients and determine what documents they possessed and ask about specific events that took place so we could better determine if we could serve this person's needs. One of the most memorable cases I worked on was a case in which a landlord claimed our clients, the tenants, owed thousands of dollars in back rent, but the landlord did not notify the tenants of their rent owed until the tenants attempted to purchase a home on their own, at which point the landlord refused to give the tenants a necessary rental reference. I worked tirelessly on this case with my supervisor, Robin, in order to determine if there was any evidence of the tenants paying rent for the months in which the landlord claimed they owed rent. In the end, because the tenants had paid cash at the landlord's request, there were not many receipts for which we could show the tenants had paid rent.

At trial, the judge determined that the landlord, the plaintiff, had not met the burden of proof in showing that the tenants did not pay their rent, or that the landlord had ever informed the tenants that they owed rent. The case ended successfully at trial in the General District Court of Albemarle as the judge determined that without proper bookkeeping records and lack of proof that the tenants were ever made aware of their alleged late rent, the landlord could not collect

judgment against the tenants. Because our clients, the tenants, were attempting to purchase a home for themselves—their first ever home for themselves—it was vital that they did not have a judgment ordered against them for money they had already paid their landlord.

Our clients were so relieved, and it was so rewarding to see someone finally be able to reach their goals and have their dreams realized with the help of the American legal system. Of course, I had many rewarding experiences such as this during my time at Central Virginia Legal Aid. Daily, I interacted with and helped clients who were in desperate need of legal assistance and were so thankful to finally have their voice recognized. Thank you again for the opportunity of a lifetime, Equal Justice America. Without this organization, law students like myself may not have opportunities like I did this summer.

Sincerely,

Macey D. Colbert

University of Virginia School of Law, 2019