



AppalReD Legal Aid

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August 17, 2018

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
c/o Katie Toman
Office Manager
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23113
Email: katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

Re: summer fellowship for Sarah Gehring

Dear Mr. Ruben and Ms. Toman:

I cannot begin to tell you how much we have enjoyed having Ms. Gehring at our office for the summer. From the beginning, she dove in and worked tirelessly to help our clients. She is clearly very passionate about representing low income clients who need someone to make their voices heard and she is a fantastic advocate for those clients.

Ms. Gehring had expressed that she had some experience with representing clients in administrative hearings and was interested in working with Social Security Disability and SSI cases, which worked out perfectly for our needs. While she was here, we worked on 30 – 35 cases in which SSDI and SSI recipients were being scheduled for hearings to have their original approval for benefits redetermined because there had been an allegation of fraud or similar fault made against the clients' representative (an attorney named Eric C. Conn) and/or the ALJ who had made the original determination and/or one or more doctors who had submitted Residual Functional Capacity reports in their cases. The Social Security Administration has been very clear that there was no allegation that the recipients themselves had participated in or even known about the scheme, nevertheless there have been roughly 4,000 claimants who have had to or are having to undergo redetermination hearings.



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Ms. Gehring was assigned two cases that had hearings scheduled toward the end of her fellowship period, but worked on a number of other cases as well. For those two cases, however, she prepared them from start to finish and represented the claimants at their hearings. Her work was performed under my supervision and was exemplary.

Ms. Gehring is particularly adept at focusing on the current state of the law and applying it to the facts of a case. For example, she worked on an unemployment appeals brief for a case in which a claimant had appealed a loss of Unemployment Insurance benefits to the Circuit Court after her administrative remedies were exhausted. She took a brief in which I had focused largely on the facts of the case and fleshed it out and re-worked it to focus more on the law as it applied to those facts. She did intensive research and breathed new life into something with which I had become frustrated, making a compelling argument that the claimant should win under the law.

Similarly, we had an eviction case in which she became very involved and, if I had been able to, I would have gladly let her argue the case in court. Ms. Gehring's work on the case included drafting a Complaint to bring an affirmative action challenging a particular lease provision that is commonly used by our local Housing Authority which, we believe, wrongfully restricts tenants' Second Amendment rights. Although we had a number of setbacks, we were eventually able to resolve the matter with the landlord without having to file the Complaint, but we have it ready in case the issue ever comes up again.

Finally, she drafted a Motion to Dismiss and a Memorandum of Law in support of the Motion in a case in which a grandparent had sought custody of a grandchild. The grandparent did not have standing to bring the action. We represented the parents. Based upon Ms. Gehring's legal research and argument, we believe that the case will be dismissed and the parents will be able to retain custody.

As the summer draws to a close, we regret that Ms. Gehring cannot stay longer. We hope that she will consider coming back to AppalReD in the future as an attorney and that we have the opportunity to work with more such talented individuals from your program in the future.

Sincerely,

/s/ Charnel M. Burton

Charnel M. Burton

Directing Attorney