

August 8, 2018

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you for enabling me to serve at the Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia in Norfolk, Virginia as part of the Equal Justice America Legal Services Fellowships program. Because of your financial support, I was able to volunteer my time to assist those in need this summer. I was also able to see firsthand what it means to work in the public interest sector of the legal field.

At the Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia, I primarily assisted the Director of Pro Bono and Private Attorney Involvement. She was extremely talented and organized. She always did what she could to help others, and it was an honor to learn from her. I was able to help her recruit attorneys for cases by preparing the legal documents ahead of time so that the cases would not be so labor-intensive. I had the opportunity to see how they cases would travel throughout the process, providing me a more holistic approach to the law. I was not simply researching the law to ensure a proper final decree, but I was also reading the information on intake forms of real people with real struggles.

The cases for which I helped prepare documents primarily concerned family law and bankruptcy. These two areas were not something I had previously imagined as a future career, but I saw how so many people needed assistance. My desire to help others was met with a consistent need at Legal Aid. People seeking representation are often anxious or even distraught. It was a positive experience using the law to assist people in problems that seem overwhelming. Oftentimes, a simple knowledge of the law would bring people relief.

One instance of knowledge bringing relief is in bankruptcy law. The average person may not realize that certain income cannot be garnished or that one will not be put in prison for civil debts. I was able to prepare advice letters for attorneys to send to people seeking aid to explain why a bankruptcy might not be in a particular individual's best interest. Although free education concerning the law may not resolve someone's debts, it can help that person make informed decisions to tackle the problems facing him or her.

Another area of law I was able to assist clients in was adult guardianship. Frequently the cases involved a parent seeking adult guardianship of a disabled child. The parents had already spent so much time and money raising the child that they could not afford legal services to continue to safeguard the best interest of the child once he or she was no longer a minor. This is a need that is often overlooked in our society. I was grateful for the opportunity to have my eyes opened to not only the need but also a way of providing assistance.

I am excited to continue my legal education to provide even more assistance in the public interest sector. Thanks to the Equal Justice America Fellowship, I had a positive learning

experience in which I was able to use my time to help people in need of legal services. I appreciate the Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia and all the hard work they passionately do for the community daily. The glimpse that I received into the public interest sector this summer has given me more understanding and drive to improve so that I can meet the needs of others effectively.

Best,

Hans Schalembier  
Regent Law School  
JD Candidate, 2020