

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I worked with the Public Benefits Unit at Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA) in Philadelphia, Pa. During my ten weeks there I managed a caseload of clients who sought representation at unemployment compensation appeal hearings, wrote strategy memos, and wrote my first appellate brief as well. The internship provided a rich learning experience and has propelled me into my second year of law school with great confidence in my ability to become a zealous legal advocate in public interest law.

My work primarily consisted of representing clients who were appealing decisions to deny them unemployment compensation benefits. I worked with clients who were terminated from their jobs and who voluntarily left their positions due to unsafe conditions or health reasons. Many of the clients' former employers were also involved in contesting the client's eligibility for benefits. When I received a case, I met with clients and reviewed records to work with the clients on developing a strategy for the appeal hearing.

Through this experience, I greatly improved my client interviewing skills. I also really enjoyed practicing developing the "theory of the case" and representing clients during the hearings. It was very rewarding to work with the clients and to help them access benefits that would be a significant help to them and their families for up to six months. I was able to help almost all my clients win their appeals cases and access benefits.

Through my experiences working with clients and researching the unemployment compensation system for writing assignments, I also developed an interest in learning more about policy-making. I appreciate more now the different roles that legal advocates can have in helping to shape public benefits systems. As I further my legal education, I owe a lot to my 1L summer internship for advancing my skills and broadening my horizons.

I appreciate the funding that Equal Justice America provided me and other students to assist our legal services summer internships.

Sincerely,

Lily Austin

Temple University Beasley School of Law – May '20