

August 13th, 2018

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I spent my summer as legal intern at Community Legal Services in Philadelphia as part of their Employment Unit. The primary work of that unit is to work on wage theft and expungement or criminal and child abuse records. As part of my internship I got to work on cases in all these areas.

My internship was very interesting, and allowed me to learn new skills, like writing letters to clients, interviewing clients, and writing demand letters. I also got to work on legal skills I had some experience in, such as drafting discovery and complaints on behalf of clients. I feel like this summer afforded me a great opportunity to become a more competent and skilled future attorney.

This summer was my first experience with direct client work and it was very different from anything else I had ever done. I enjoyed getting to help clients and to navigate difficult legal procedures in order to help them. I spent a lot of time on the phone, trying to help clients understand what was happening to them, how we were going to try and help, and really listening to what they needed and what would best help under their circumstances.

These experiences reminded me how hard poverty is, and why so many people lose the will to fight against things like employer abuse or criminal records. Most of my clients were juggling multiple issues, often with children they needed to take care of, and could not afford any of the things that could have made their lives easier. However, it was also a reminder of how many people are trying really hard to make their lives better, despite these difficult

circumstances. Time and again I saw clients who had been rejected for job after job and who had not done anything wrong in ten to twenty years, but they were still struggling to get by or hold down a steady job and stable housing on the low-income they made. Yet, they still came to CLS on time, called to follow up on their cases, and really worked to get what they deserved, and that was inspiring to see.

CLS also gave me the rare opportunity to use my policy skills as well. CLS attorneys who recognize patterns of abuse or problems with the system take those problems to Philadelphia's city government or to Harrisburg and advocate for their clients on a larger scale. This seemed to me like a truly effective use of resources, to try and help those currently in need and prevent the same thing happening to others in the future.

Through CLS I got to work on an appeal to an occupational licensing board that might argue the unconstitutional nature of that system. I got to draft the organization's comments on the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry's proposal to improve overtime regulations. I also got to witness the success of a multi-year advocacy effort when Clean Slate was passed. All of these opportunities showed me why attorneys need to play a significant role in policy advocacy, so that legislation and regulation are written in a way that effectively combat injustice.

This summer was an incredible opportunity to experience legal problems on the ground with clients, and I am so grateful that EJA helped make that experience possible financially. I look forward to continuing to work in the public interest space as a practicing attorney.

Sincerely,

Leigh Anne Schriever
University of Pennsylvania Law School