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August 31, 2018

Emma Ruben
Liaison to EJA Fellows
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Charlene Donfack Final EJA Fellowship Report

Dear Ms. Ruben,

On behalf of the Education Law Center and myself, I want to express my appreciation to Equal Justice America for the fellowship that allowed me to work at the Education Law Center (ELC) this summer.

My overall task was to assist the ELC team in its work to advance education justice for students in Pennsylvania, with a focus on students in the Greater Pittsburgh region. I was supervised by staff attorney Cheryl Kleiman who I closely worked with throughout the summer.

Much of my time was spent conducting legal research and analysis on several time sensitive matters. For example, I had to quickly get up to speed on the IDEA's "stay put" provision and analyze its application to one of ELC's clients. I also analyzed proposed revisions to the Pittsburgh Public Schools Code of Student Conduct to determine the extent ELC's recommendations concerning the adultification of Black girls were incorporated into the district's dress code.

In addition, I had the privilege to attend a few school district and state board meetings, where I observed how issues of school funding and school safety were raised and addressed by high level decision makers. It was impressive to observe that much of the discussion was informed by the ELC's advocacy and helped me better understand the role of lawyers in larger movement education justice.

I also spent portions of my fellowship fielding phone call from parents and family members who had questions about their child's education. These included questions about the rights around parent engagement and involvement at school, as well as the rights of students with disabilities to receive a free and appropriate public education. My role as the front line contact for ELC on the phone was to understand and listen to the parents' concerns so then I could issue-spot and provide relevant information in consultation with my lawyer supervisor. This forced me to

develop my interviewing skills and gain experience working with families that were justifiably upset or frustrated with the education and legal processes.

Finally, I drafted several legal memos and supported the attorneys in the office in drafting correspondence that was ultimately sent to opposing counsel in one of ELC's cases. All in all, the passion and dedication of ELC attorneys to ensure access and equity to high quality education in the Pennsylvania is truly inspiring and contagious. With that feeling, I concluded my internship with the firm determination to stay sensitive to issues of injustice and use my knowledge of the law to denounce them wherever possible.

Sincerely,
Charlene Donfack
University of Pittsburgh School of Law
EJA Summer 2018 Fellow at the Education Law Center

I have gotten to know Charlene Donfack over the past summer when she interned with the Education Law Center as an Equal Justice America Fellow. Charlene is incredibly bright, professional and hard-working.

As an EJA Fellow, Charlene successfully completed numerous research and writing assignments, and independently managed her workload under time tight constraints. She conducted legal research and analyzed a range of education law topics, including the rights of students with disabilities and the rights of student who have been involved in the juvenile justice system.

Charlene was simply a pleasure to have in the office. She exhibited a strong work ethic, professionalism, self-direction and collegiality. I truly appreciate EJA's support to allow Charlene to work in our office – work that will ultimately inform our systemic efforts to improve Pennsylvania's public education system.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need anything further. I hope to have the opportunity to host another EJA Fellow in the future.

Sincerely,
Cheryl Kleiman
Staff Attorney
Education Law Center
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