

August 26, 2016

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Buildings II, Suite 204, 13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I want to thank you for the fellowship, which allowed me to work as an intern at the Unemployment Insurance Clinic at the University of Michigan Law School. The clinic assists unemployed workers in Michigan by providing pro-bono representation in unemployment insurance benefits disputes before administrative bodies.

After graduating from college in Pakistan in 2012, I was unemployed. When I did find a job, I was unemployed again after having worked just five months. After a few months of searching, I was able to find a stable job. Through this experience, I realized that without a safety net or benefits, even temporary unemployment can cause lasting financial and social damage, especially for those living paycheck to paycheck. Working at the clinic provided me with the opportunity to represent such individuals, who often lost their jobs despite their hard work ethic.

During my time at the clinic, we primarily represented workers who had been falsely accused of fraud in claiming benefits from the Unemployment Insurance Agency. In an effort to computerize the entire benefits system, the Agency had installed a software which required employers and fired workers to input data. If the information provided by the ex-employer and worker did not match, the Agency presumed that the unemployed worker had intentionally defrauded the Agency to obtain benefits. If the benefits to the unemployed workers had already been paid, the Agency sought to recover a penalty four times the amount initially paid as benefits.

When one of our clients faced such fraud charges, the Agency demanded \$ 60,000 in restitution. Under the supervision of my professor Steve Gray, I represented the client in a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge and obtained a dismissal of the fraud charges. The Agency had failed to meet its burden in showing that our client misreported his wages during the time he had received benefits. As a law student, I felt rewarded by helping the client navigate this complex and flawed system. It felt as if justice had been served. Thank you.

Regards,

Adeel