

June 4, 2016

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112
Dan@EqualJusticeAmerica.org

Mr. Ruben,

I write to express my gratitude to EJA for supporting the Temporary Restraining Order Project at Yale Law School. The TRO Project brings together Yale Law School students who are eager to help the New Haven community and vulnerable community members in crisis situations. We staff an office at the New Haven Judicial District Family Court. When someone comes to the court to seek a TRO, the clerk directs him or her to our office for assistance. We help the applicant prepare the paperwork and write a lucid and compelling affidavit to ensure that the judge will grant the necessary relief. We also explain the next steps in the process, bringing a measure of clarity to a complex legal system, and we connect applicants to other domestic violence resources. We helped hundreds of applicants apply for and receive TROs this year. Your support of this project helps keep our office full of enthusiastic volunteers, ensuring that we meet the needs of New Haven residents who may be experiencing a crisis.

With EJA's support, I served as a Director of the TRO Project. I oversaw training efforts for all of our volunteers. This year, we attracted over 40% of the 1L class to the program. I prepared training materials and led a team of experienced volunteers in explaining the process: from the nuts and bolts of Connecticut law to the nuances of interviewing someone about a domestic violence experience. I also prepared refresher trainings for returning volunteers to

review the process and to talk through any challenges they faced in the office. Finally, I revised and maintained a manual that serves as a reference for volunteers in the office.

Though my role focused on training volunteers, I also had the chance to work directly with several applicants as they sought TROs. On one memorable day, I helped a man who had fled his home because of frightening and abusive behavior by a roommate. As I worked through the process with him, he asked if I could also help his girlfriend, who lived with him. He said she was downstairs outside the courthouse with their belongings. I was moved by the gravity of the situation: they were in such imminent danger that they had fled with all of their possessions and come to the courthouse. Thinking back on cases like this, I realize how essential our service is to members of the New Haven community who have no other options. We greatly appreciate EJA's support in helping us to continue this rewarding work.

Best,

James Mandilk
Yale Law School
Class of 2017