

September 29, 2019

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My work as a Law Clerk at the New Hampshire Legal Assistance (“NHLA”) this past summer was the highlight of my legal career, and I owe much of my success there to my Summer Equal Justice America Legal Services Fellowship. During my summer at NHLA, I was able to get court experience, I was supervised by incredibly hard-working and intelligent attorneys, and I was able to work directly with clients. In addition, I was able to get experience in many areas of the law, including housing, youth, senior, and domestic law.

Housing law was where I spent a majority of my time. One of my most memorable clients was a young mother of two who had been late on rent several times because of frequent changes in her employment status. Before she came to us she had received three eviction notices for failure to pay rent, but was always able to pay what she owed by the “expiration date” of the eviction notice and so was not evicted. But this time, because she had “cured” three previous eviction notices, she was not able to simply pay what she owed and remain in her housing. Our first meeting with her showed me how tough finding and maintaining housing can be for our clients. She was already in subsidized housing and with unsteady employment she was just not making enough to cover rent, utilities, and care for her and her children. She had been let go twice in the last eight months, and despite her best efforts to get unemployment or a new job, it just wasn’t enough to cover what she needed. She told us that if she were evicted, she had no place to go. We were able to get the landlord to give our client more time to come up with the money, which she was able to do.

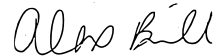
During my time working in the area of youth law, one of my clients was a child not getting the help he needed in school. He had Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from abuse he had suffered as a very young child, and he had bounced between schools for years. Even when he was technically enrolled at a school he spent a lot of time at home because the school did not know how to handle him, and so would frequently suspend him, requiring his mother to take time off work or to pay a babysitter to pick him up and stay with him for the rest of the day. After many months of intense discussions, the school district agreed to pay for the child to get more intensive help at a residential school.

A few of my clients were women who were seeking protective orders against their partners. They had frequently dealt with years of abuse in which they tried their best to protect themselves and their children. One of my clients was able to safely separate from her abusive partner, but she came to us for help creating a parenting plan for their young child. That client was one of the strongest people I have ever met. She worked tirelessly to make just barely enough to cover her and her child’s costs. She was also clearly very frightened of facing her child’s father in court,

but she spoke up for what she needed and did not let him frighten her out of the suit. In court he was abrasive and loud, but our client stood tall and we came out with a favorable agreement.

I went to law school because I wanted to work with low-income clients, but a part of me was always afraid that I made a mistake, and that I would not enjoy the work or would not be good at it. This summer was monumental for me because I learned that I could be very good at the work and that I was right to trust my instincts. I truly loved my time at NHLA this summer. The clients I met were trying their hardest to make ends meet, but needed just a little help. I learned this summer that a lot of the work of being a lawyer in civil services is trying to convince people in power – school districts, landlords, etc. – to help our clients, but if necessary, being able to step into a court room and be a great attorney. I feel very lucky to have worked with some truly wonderful attorneys in this field this summer. This summer was truly incredible and I hope to continue the work I did this summer as an attorney for low income clients after I graduate in May.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alex Brill".

Alexandra Brill