



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Matt Lustbader

Law School: University of Michigan Law School

Organization: Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing

Week of June 15th:

My first two weeks at the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing have been super interesting and inspiring! The first few days were spent acquainting myself with the basic, as well as COVID-19 related, protections that tenants are entitled to in Illinois and in Chicago specifically. Since then, I've conducted research in support of an appellate brief within a lawsuit bringing claims under Chicago's Keeping Chicago Renting Ordinance; drafted discovery requests as part of litigation on behalf of a tenant association; and written a letter to a landlord's attorney on behalf of a tenant.

I've really enjoyed my first few weeks at LCBH and am excited to continue to learn about the ways in which I can protect and advance the rights of tenants throughout Chicago! Please consider supporting Equal Justice America, which has helped to support this important work.

Week of July 6th:

I cannot believe I'm already in the sixth week of my internship at the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing. I have learned so much already and continue to be inspired by the work and the people I have interacted with. In an environment filled with uncertainty and physical separation from their clients, the attorneys at LCBH have demonstrated an amazing degree of perseverance by using this period of uncertainty to advance the rights and well-being of their clients. Despite juggling fears of job insecurity, caregiving responsibilities, and concerns about their own health, the tenants, who I have worked with, have been persistent about building the record in their cases and advocating for their rights as tenants.



Week of July 27th:

I'm grateful for Equal Justice America's support of my work at the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing' this summer. Since my last update, Governor Pritzker extended the eviction moratorium in Illinois to August 22. This is excellent news for tenants. However, I still worry about a potential flood of evictions when the moratorium ends. I'm thankful that organizations like LCBH will be there to defend the rights of many tenants through this wave of evictions but worry about the many tenants that may fall through the cracks. While funding for rental assistance, as well as requirements that landlords in Chicago provide more substantial notice before filing evictions, are welcome new developments, I worry that it won't be enough to quell the wave of housing instability that is coming. I encourage you to consider supporting Equal Justice America, which supports fellowships for legal aid work throughout the country.

Week of August 10th:

I completed my internship with the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing last week and am extremely appreciative of the staff at LCBH and Equal Justice America for providing me a window into realities that face low income renters in Chicago and many communities throughout the country. It was definitely frustrating at times to advise tenants of the very limited rights that they have even during the current pandemic, and to be able to offer little more than additional time to move. However, there were also many positive moments. For example, I helped negotiate an out of court rent repayment plan agreement for a tenant, who had temporarily lost his income due to COVID-19, allowing him and his family to remain in their current housing.