

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I was chosen as the very first recipient of the Amber Racine Fellowship at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia. I was extremely humbled by this fellowship opportunity because of the legacy that Amber Racine left in her short time within the legal field. This provided me with an added incentive to work that much harder for the clients I was assisting.

I worked with Community Legal Services' Youth Justice Project ("YJP") under the supervision of Attorney Tracie Johnson. I chose to work in this unit because of a long-held passion for working with youth. Aiding in solving some of their legal issues was an opportunity I looked forward to. I was able to work with youth to secure resources and benefits that would aid them during these difficult times. I have also aided in the advocacy of policy changes within Job Corps which is a program for youth to get educational and vocational training. This work involved researching the ways in which youth applicants were being denied because of court supervision, contact with the criminal justice system, and fines. We then set up a meeting with them to discuss policy changes regarding those issues which led to a productive conversation and the building of new contacts within Job Corps.

I recently closed a case for a youth client who was cut off from accessing much needed Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUA) benefits. The client was a 17-year-old young woman who had lost her first job due to the pandemic and had been denied regular Unemployment Compensation because she was not financially eligible. She applied for PUA and was receiving benefits until her account was flagged for an IP investigation. The Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) were requiring her to verify her identity through a third-party vendor, ID.me, whose software is not accessible to anyone under the age of 18. This presented a barrier to resolving the issue on her claim for the 17-year-old client. Upon reviewing her portal, we learned that the client had already uploaded the required identifying documents, so I advocated with a contact at DLI, informing them that the client was unable to complete the ID.me process because of her age and had already uploaded all the necessary documents therefore they should release her payments immediately. The following day, they resolved the issue on her claim and released her payments. After this advocacy, the client received almost \$4,000 she was owed since the time her payments were shut off.

Not only have I worked with the Youth Justice Project, I also worked with attorneys in other units as well. I have written memos that dealt with complicated legal issues, which have taught me even more about the difficult legal challenges that exist for many people. The most shocking was the discovery that SSI benefits meant for the welfare and wellbeing of youth in foster care are often diverted and used by states to reimburse themselves for care of children

within foster care. I learned about this disturbing practice while sitting in a Congressional meeting where I heard awful stories from youth who were victims of this practice. I relished an opportunity to do research and write on this topic for CLS. As this advocacy moves forward, I will be proud that, even in a small way, I was able to help.

I have also had the privilege to shadow Holly Beck, an attorney in the Housing Unit, who showed me around Municipal Court and allowed me to sit in on some of her cases. I learned about housing law but, more importantly, I was able to see an attorney that cared about her clients and spoke to them as human beings, rather than another case. All the attorneys that I have met while interning at CLS have been that way. It has truly been an honor to be among them and to see how much they care about their clients. It has affirmed my goal of becoming an attorney, one that works for/protects their clients and continues that work outside of the courtroom as well.

Christopher Moore
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