



Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



Name: McKenzie Green

Law School: University of Texas School of Law

Organization: Texas Fair Defense Project

Update 1:

I have had a great first two weeks interning with the Texas Fair Defense Project during the summer after my 1L year at The University of Texas School of Law supported by Equal Justice America. One of my favorite events so far was a training for legal professionals who want to provide legal assistance to unhoused individuals in Texas who are cited under HB 1925 and Prob B, two recently passed policies that will contribute to the criminalization of homelessness in Texas. Equal access to legal aid is essential to ensuring that people are not jailed simply for lack of access to a safe place to go and/or financial means to pay off fines and fees and I am grateful to have the opportunity to play a role in providing it.

Update 2:

I am also at the halfway point of my summer with the Texas Fair Defense Project before heading back to The University of Texas School of Law in the fall. Since my last update, I have been working more on projects providing direct services to clients and have been drafting expunction and non-disclosure petitions. Record clearing is an important service because having a criminal record, even for charges that did not lead to a conviction, can be a significant barrier to access housing, jobs, education, and social services.

Update 3:

Sharing my third EJA Fellow Update about my time at the Texas Fair Defense Project before heading back to The University of Texas School of Law in the fall for my 2L year. Since my last update, I have been working on a research memo regarding the constitutionality of court policies that make pretrial release more difficult to access for indigent individuals in comparison to those with financial resources. Allowing people in the pretrial stage to remain in the community as much as possible is important because they are then able to maintain stability in their lives. People who are detained pretrial risk losing their employment, housing, and even custody of their children. Helpful information on the harmfulness of pretrial detention is available on the Vera Institute of Justice's website linked here: https://lnkd.in/eY42_cg



Entry 4:

Sharing my final EJA Fellow Update about my internship with the Texas Fair Defense Project before heading back to The University of Texas School of Law for my 2L year in just a few weeks. TFDP supports individuals who are unable to meet the conditions of their probation because of probation costs or other fines and fees they cannot afford to pay in seeking to have these costs waived or reduced to an affordable amount. Being unable to complete probation requirements means that low-income people are caught under community supervision for years on end, which makes it more difficult to keep up with employment and family responsibilities, while people with greater financial means are able to move on with their lives. Remaining on probation also means that individuals are at risk of being faced with incarceration for minor technical violations, which is a significant source of stress. Providing legal representation for low-income Texans serving on probation is an important step towards reducing the economic inequality of community supervision programs.

Anyone interested in supporting expanding legal aid access by helping to fund EJA fellows like myself can donate!