



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Caitlin Willenbrink

**Law School:** University of Wisconsin Law School

**Organization:** Kentucky Equal Justice Center

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**Update 1:** Time flies: I just started my fourth week as a law student intern with Kentucky Equal Justice Center! I'm proud and humbled to have been selected as an Equal Justice America Fellow for this summer internship.

This week, I'll be participating in meetings to coordinate our community's eviction prevention efforts as the CDC eviction protections end. Additionally, I'm helping review documents related to our class action litigation over medical debt collection practices. Doc review isn't the most glamorous work, but it's a great window into the everyday "nuts and bolts" of what civil legal aid and consumer protection attorneys do!

With EJA's support, I'm gaining lawyering skills as well as insights into how we can ensure the law protects our neighbors who are marginalized and vulnerable. (Thanks to University of Wisconsin Law School for connecting me to EJA!) I hope you'll join me in supporting EJA's work -- with your help, EJA can connect more students like me to summer and post-graduation work in the public interest field.

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**Update 2:** Sharing my second EJA Fellow Update today! On the docket this week at Kentucky Equal Justice Center: finishing up a blog post about eviction prevention, gathering facts to form the basis for a new complaint, submitting some open records requests, and of course more doc review for our class action.

While I go about all these tasks, I'm also joining other civil justice advocates in breathing a sigh of relief at the CDC's extension of its pandemic eviction protections. This gives legal aid programs and community-based organizations more time to ensure that rental assistance funds reach all renters who are eligible. I was also grateful to see Associate Attorney General Gupta's letter (<https://www.justice.gov/asg/page/file/1405886/download>) lifting up what housing advocates have been saying for a year now: that state courts can and must make simple administrative and procedural modifications



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so that nobody who's eligible for rental assistance misses out on it and needlessly gets an eviction judgment on their record.

These positive (and necessary!) changes happened because of public interest lawyers, who not only provide representation to individuals who need it, but also amplify their clients' and communities' needs so that policymakers can see where system-level interventions are needed. KEJC has been a great place to learn about this kind of system-level advocacy while I also learn more traditional lawyering and litigation skills. With your support, Equal Justice America can give more law students at University of Wisconsin Law School and schools across the country the opportunity to build these skills too, both in school and after graduation.

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**Update 3:** For my third EJA Fellow Update, I wanted to reflect a bit on the topic of notice. Notice is one of the core elements of due process, and a theme in KEJC's litigation and advocacy efforts (and so a theme of my work this summer).

A person whose legal rights and obligations will be impacted by a government action must have adequate notice of that action and of their opportunity to respond. Civil legal aid and advocacy organizations like KEJC play a crucial role not only in providing legal representation to people who can't afford it, but also in holding powerful actors accountable for giving adequate notice and fair process to those folks.

This summer, with the support of EJA and UW, I've contributed to KEJC's efforts to ensure people have adequate notice and a fair opportunity to be heard as they're navigating evictions, medical debt collections, and the restoration of their voting rights after felony convictions. Ensuring adequate notice and fair process helps realize civil legal aid organizations' goal of equal access to the courts, regardless of someone's income. You can help realize this goal too, and build the next generation of public interest lawyers, by donating to EJA.

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**Entry 4:** It's hard to believe this is my fourth and final #EJAFellowUpdate for the summer. My time with Kentucky Equal Justice Center has flown by! I've learned a lot about how marginalized people experience the civil justice system as we've dealt with issues of emergency rental assistance, displacement and gentrification, consumer debt collection and even voting rights. (This whole summer has been one long object lesson in the University of Wisconsin Law School's core "law in action" idea that what matters is not only the legal rules and processes as-written, but how those rules look and work in practice.) And I'm walking away with a greater understanding of what lawyers can do—from providing individual representation to advocating for policy change—to make that system fairer and to hold our institutions accountable for ensuring all people have a right to be heard.

I'm leaving my summer internship with a renewed commitment to doing public interest work after graduation. I hope you'll join me in donating to Equal Justice America, whose support made my summer experience possible.