



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Tara McClanaghan

**Law School:** Wayne State University Law School

**Organization:** Legal Aid and Defender Association

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### Update 1:

This summer I am working as a Legal Intern at the Legal Aid and Defender Association, with the help of Equal Justice America. EJA provides fellowships to law students and attorneys working to provide important legal services and representation to those who cannot afford to hire a lawyer. Through this work, EJA hopes to uphold the promise of "justice for all" and to create a more fair and equitable legal system.

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### Update 2:

Hello again!

One aspect of my job at the Legal Aid and Defender Association has involved completing applications to expunge criminal records. If you live in Michigan, the recent change in MI law regarding criminal record expungement might impact you or someone you know! Having a clean slate is beneficial for people's ability to move forward with their lives and apply for things like jobs and housing. I'm grateful for the opportunity to help with this process, thanks to Equal Justice America.

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### Update 3:

I mentioned in my previous post that a recent change in MI law has affected the criminal record expungement process and I wanted to expand on that here.

Part of the change involves marijuana related offenses. Despite recreational marijuana use and possession now being legal in the state, a criminal record for a marijuana offense can still set a person back in many aspects of their life.



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

LEGAL SERVICES FELLOWSHIPS

Many Michiganders are eligible to have their criminal records set aside because enough years have passed since they completed the terms of their sentence and they have not reoffended but being eligible doesn't do them much good without legal assistance. The people who are most in need of having their records expunged, those who need a clean slate to get a better job or secure housing, are unlikely to be able to afford to hire a lawyer to assist with the process.

Thankfully, the state is working on an automatic expungement process for marijuana offenses. The implementation of that automatic process, however, is not set to go into place until 2023. The trouble is, criminal records for marijuana offenses will continue negatively impacting people's lives in the meantime. Many legal aid offices and pro bono lawyers across the state are working to process criminal record expungement applications for tens of thousands of people who cannot afford to wait for the automatic process.

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#### **Entry 4:**

I recently completed my internship with the Legal Aid and Defender Association, and I am so grateful for the learning experience I had there.

LADA provides legal representation to clients in a wide array of civil issues. I was able to meet and interview dozens of clients and even represent a client myself in a housing matter. This is an issue that is especially prevalent with the COVID-19 pandemic putting many people's housing in jeopardy. Those who are struggling to pay their rent typically cannot afford legal representation, leaving them vulnerable to eviction. Free legal representation can make the difference of keeping someone housed.

My EJA Fellowship helped to keep me housed while I completed my internship. EJA provides fellowships to law students and recent law grads to help them engage in public interest work. I would greatly appreciate any amount you are able to give if you consider this work valuable.