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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I interned this summer in the Family/Domestic Violence Unit of the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia working on custody, child support, and civil protection order cases.

I started my internship this summer one day earlier than the five other law students who were working with me. I was concerned that this might end up being something of a waste of time—orientation would start the next day with everyone else so I was unsure exactly what I would be doing. It turned out to be the complete opposite: maybe an hour after I arrived I was sitting in a client interview talking with a domestic violence victim who had suffered some of the most horrific technological abuse. The case was fascinating on an intellectual level because of the technological aspects which the law is still learning how to address—threats and identity theft on facebook, hacking into cellphone accounts onlines, etc. And of course it was amazing to be sitting talking with a client on my first day. After meeting with her, I was able to draft a supplemental motion to add further incidents to her Civil Protection Order Petition. I went home that evening knowing the summer was going to be amazing—in one day I had written a draft of a court filing, talked extensively with a client, and hopefully started the wheels turning towards her getting the legal remedies she deserved.

The rest of the summer absolutely delivered on the promise of that first day. I learned so much about the technical aspects of DC law while writing a Child Support bench book that will be a resource for the Legal Aid attorneys in court as they continue the office's new project – day of representation in Child support court at the DC Superior Court. And I was able to work extensively with numerous domestic violence victims. Domestic violence has been my passion for many years, and I came to law school with the hope that in a few years I would represent these victims and help them gain whatever legal remedy would be most beneficial for them. And while I couldn't represent victims this summer (due to the DC rules on student representation) I drafted entire trials –directs, crosses, openings, and closings—interviewed witnesses and victims, working with other agencies advocating for these clients, and generally was allowed to do everything up to the moment when the hearing actually started. All of this left me feeling incredibly prepared for my work this fall with the George Washington University Family Justice Clinic, in a few weeks I will be representing victims in these cases myself under the supervision of an attorney.

The most rewarding moments of this summer were working with clients—seeing a long drawn out CPO case finally resolve with the issuance of an order and spousal support for our client, speaking with a victim's teenage children about what they had witnessed, helping connect clients with other resources and advocate for them with these other agencies. Fortuitously, the last day of my internship was also the trial date for the victim I had worked with on my very first day. Her abuser was now facing criminal charges (thanks in large part to Legal Aid's advocacy with police and the USAO) and her CPO was trailing that criminal case. In the grand scheme of the justice system her 10 week wait for this moment is pretty minimal, but I know it felt like years for her. Fortunately it was a worthwhile wait, and while many other cases I worked on are still ongoing, in that case at least I was thrilled to see her get the legal protection of a CPO as well seeing society recognize that his behavior towards her was abusive and criminal and he was

criminally punished for it.

I am so grateful to you and your organization for making my work this summer possible. I'm so grateful that I was able to be a part of the amazing work the Legal Aid is doing.

Sincerely,

Katie Thompson

JD Candidate 2012
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