

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

August 16, 2010

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to thank you and Equal Justice America for generously funding my summer internship at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law in Chicago, Illinois. Without your help, it might not have been possible, and I am grateful for your assistance.

The Shriver Center is a unique organization. Rather than taking a direct legal aid approach, it mixes advocacy and public policy work to promote lasting solutions to the many problems that face poor people in both Illinois and the nation generally. Part prevention and part treatment, this approach focuses on the root causes of poverty, like the lack of economic opportunity and inadequate education. In these depressing economic times, finding novel ways to ensure equal and fair access to public services like housing and unemployment benefits is increasingly important. As state and federal budgets are slashed, the cuts often come at the expense of the poor, who lack political clout. The Shriver Center aims to make sure the voice of poor people gets heard, something that is both difficult and requires an open-minded outlook.

This summer I was introduced to the complete range of Shriver Center projects, from equal housing to women's rights. To illustrate the breadth of my work, at various times during the summer I researched and wrote legal memoranda analyzing: the Fair Housing Act and the Department of Housing's duty to affirmatively further fair housing; how the use of arrest records in employment decisions can have a disparate impact on minority job applicants; how the 2009 stimulus bill allocates new funding for the Child Care Development Fund; and other topics affecting the poor. I also spent substantial time reviewing Freedom of Information Act requests to ensure that certain recently enacted criminal laws were not unfairly (and counterproductively) targeting the poor.

During this time I was privileged to work with the talented and passionate attorneys and staff of the Shriver Center, who were universally kind and hard-working. The majority of my time was spent studying the contours of the Fair Housing Act, and looking for ways—both new and old—to improve the access of poor people from some of Chicago's worst neighbors to decent housing. Among other things, this involved trying (and mostly failing) to come up with an innovative legal solution to prevent the de facto destruction of existing public housing. It is a small condolence, but at least educationally, this lack of success is perhaps more instructive than many other victories, because it highlights the vast inequities of our legal system, and is a testament to why the blended policy approach is necessary in the first place.

This was a rewarding summer. I was able to both help people in serious need and also learn a lot about my city and the relationship between the poor and our legal system. In difficult times, when budgets are tight and donations are down, it means a lot that organizations like EJA are able to continue their mission of helping students like me help others. Thank you, and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Andrew Kenny
University of Chicago Law School, Class of 2012



SHRIVER CENTER

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

August 26, 2010

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

Re: Andrew Kenny

Dear Dan:

Andrew recently completed a summer internship here at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law that was funded in part by a grant from Equal Justice America. This is a report on and evaluation of his fellowship.

Andrew's work at the Shriver Center was outstanding. He took on several assignments that would have been very challenging for a student who has finished their second year of law school, let alone a 1L like Andrew. He demonstrated superior research, analytic and writing skills on all of his assignments. His research was thorough, his analysis persuasive, and his writing clear. His research and writing captured the nuances of the projects he worked on and his memos were sufficiently detailed to give the reader a good grasp of the underlying law, including any subtleties.

Andrew worked on assignments in the areas of housing, criminal records and child care assistance. His main assignments were to:

- Research a number of different types of causes of action to challenge the de facto demolition of public housing through decline and underutilization, from an APA claim to a civil rights claim.
- Review the case law and pleadings where U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) argued that the duty to affirmatively further fair housing under the Fair Housing Act was not enforceable against them. He then evaluated those arguments against positions taken by HUD in other litigation where it said that such duty was enforceable against municipalities. He crafted arguments we are using in a letter to HUD about this gross inconsistency.

- Research several issues relating to the state’s child care assistance program and the interplay of federal and state law.
- Help with a document review of a municipality’s massive response to a freedom of information act request. The response of approximately 1000 pages was in an unwieldy format, but he synthesized the information in a way that really gives a much better sense of how the municipality enforces its crime-free rental ordinance. He thoughtfully analyzed the cases in the FOIA response and presented that information in different formats, i.e., narrative, chart, etc. His analysis was careful and very thorough. He also went above and beyond by making a map of the homes affected by the ordinance to determine whether any geographic patterns existed. He also took what was essentially a disorganized pile of jpegs and organized them into searchable and labeled documents for later use.

As I said, Andrew’s assignments were challenging and his work product was of the highest caliber. As always, we are very appreciative of EJA’s support, which makes it possible for talented law interns to work here and make significant contributions to advancing the work of the Center and the low-income people we represent.

Sincerely,

Dan Lesser, Senior Attorney