

August 27, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I had a fantastic summer at Cambridge & Somerville Legal Services, and I greatly appreciate your assistance in making it possible. During my 10 week internship, I worked on a variety of cases covering a range of practice areas, including housing law, disability rights law, utilities law, public benefits and special education law. I conducted legal research and wrote memoranda on special education issues. For all other practice areas, I was given the opportunity to handle all aspects of our clients' cases. Of the approximately 20 elderly and/or disabled clients I served, I was able to resolve the legal issues for at least 15 of those clients. The remaining cases are pending, but look promising for our clients.

Over the course of the summer, there were a number of cases that required particularly forceful advocacy. For an elderly Haitian, Section 8 tenant who was severely depressed as a result of living in a building with noisy and harassing neighbors, I was able to convince the landlord and the Cambridge Housing Authority to terminate her lease a month before the original end date. For an elderly, severely disabled client who had been leveled with exorbitant electric bills due to a Massachusetts State Sanitary Code violation in her building, I was able to convince both the landlord and the Homelessness Prevention Program in Somerville to pay our client's utility arrearages, which totaled over \$500.

My most notable success this summer involved SafeLink Wireless, a government sponsored program that provides free cell phone services to low-income individuals. SafeLink has a policy which states that only one individual per address is allowed access to its services. Our client, who lived in YMCA single room occupancy housing, was denied access to SafeLink services because another unrelated individual who was living in YMCA housing already had access to those services. In addition to overriding the system for our client and setting him up with a free cell phone, I contacted the Assistant Director of Government Relations for SafeLink and urged him to change SafeLink policy to allow unrelated, independent individuals access to cell phone services, regardless of their housing situations. SafeLink eventually agreed to override the system for any addresses of single room occupancy locations we could provide. Our eventual goal is to help SafeLink implement a sweeping policy change.

My only disappointment with this summer is that it had to end: I wish I had the opportunity to continue my SafeLink advocacy; I also wish I could have completely resolved the cases for two clients who received 30 Day Notice to Quits for the alleged lease violation of "poor housekeeping." My desire to continue this type of advocacy for low-income, elderly clients was the driving force behind my decision to enroll in the Elder Advocacy Clinic at UVA for this coming academic year. Over the summer, I was given the opportunity to apply my legal skills in

the service of some of the most vulnerable members of society – low income, elderly, disabled – and I am thrilled that I will be able to continue this satisfying and fulfilling work during the school year.

It is no exaggeration to say that my work this summer at Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services (CASLS) has inspired me to pursue a career in public interest, and has geared my focus to elder law and disability rights law. To the extent that CASLS, and specifically my supervising attorney, Deborah Filler, gave me the opportunity to handle all aspects of cases while providing me with constant feedback and guidance, I believe it would have been difficult to have found another place where I could have developed such great passion for the work. Deborah Filler was a wonderful supervisor and I greatly appreciate both her devotion to her clients, and her insistence on giving me responsibility without compromising the quality of the legal services provided.

I thank you so much for helping make this summer possible; the support of Equal Justice America was invaluable.

Sincerely,

Beth Zweig
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J.D. Expected 2011