

October 4, 2017

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am incredibly grateful that Equal Justice America provided funding for my internship at the Legal Assistance Foundation (LAF) this summer. Because of EJA's assistance, I was able to follow my passion for immigrant justice by providing legal services to immigrant communities who could not otherwise afford an attorney. I owe it to EJA for giving me this opportunity and for confirming my commitment to helping the underserved.

While working at LAF's Immigrant and Workers' Rights Practice Group this summer, I was engaged in meaningful and interesting work while also developing my legal research and writing skills. Most of my clients were non-citizens living at or below the poverty level who had experienced domestic abuse or other types of criminal violence. I helped these clients by preparing U visa applications and self-petitions for the Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA). Through this work, I helped set these individuals on a path toward citizenship and out of the shadows of society. This would not have been possible without Equal Justice America's financial assistance.

One particularly rewarding aspect of my internship was helping lessen the complexities of the immigration system for our clients. I had one client who became very panicked when his employment authorization document was soon to expire. This client was the sole income earner in his family risked losing his job if he did not receive timely employment authorization renewal. I conducted research, prepared an affidavit, and drafted a short letter to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services requesting that employment authorization application be expedited. Our client ended up receiving his employment authorization renewal on time. Our client was incredibly grateful and came to the office to thank me personally. It was rewarding to know that even something as simple as work authorization could help our client keep his job and put food on the table for his family.

Due to its detailed and bureaucratic nature, even simple immigration dealings, like securing a work permit, can be frustrating students and attorneys. For our clients, it can be even more complex. Organizations such as LAF help clients secure these benefits which makes a huge impact on their lives. Were it not for EJA, I would not have been able to take part in this meaningful work. I am incredibly grateful to EJA for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Spira
Chicago-Kent College of Law, Class of 2019