

August 21, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you for making possible my internship with South Brooklyn Legal Services (SBLs). I spent a very rewarding summer working with the organization's HIV Project, a general litigation unit that provides civil legal assistance to low-income Brooklyn residents living with HIV.

Many of the HIV Project's cases involve housing, public benefits, and family law, and in the ten weeks of my internship, I was exposed to all these practice areas. I gained hands-on experience drafting motions, advocating with government agencies, and researching housing law and social service policy. I also had the chance to regularly attend court proceedings, and to represent a client at an administrative hearing.

The HIV Project was a fantastic place to intern, not only because the unit's practice is so varied, but because its attorneys are an exceptionally talented and close-knit group. I could not have asked for better mentors. My supervisor gave me considerable responsibility, yet remained accessible when I ran into problems or had questions. She assigned me substantive work and gave me constructive feedback.

From helping to prevent a disabled man's eviction, to assisting an immigrant mother seeking a complicated divorce from her abusive husband, my work this summer was consistently gratifying. Among my most hard-fought successes was getting Food Stamps reinstated for a homebound client whose benefits were wrongly discontinued as he recovered from serious surgery. Despite its own error in closing his case, the social service agency insisted that the client reapply for benefits in person at a new center, a task they knew would be impossible for him given his health. Without my intervention, this client and his family would have been unable to shop for necessities in the crucial weeks following his discharge from the hospital. My advocacy led an agency director to issue Food Stamps to the household in time to prevent severe hardship.

Another meaningful accomplishment for me this summer was appearing at an administrative hearing, where I won a fully favorable decision for a client who was appealing his denial of Social Security disability benefits. Several factors made the client's case challenging. Although he was HIV-positive, his inability to work stemmed from mental health problems, which can be difficult to document and are often viewed more subjectively than physical ailments. The client's medical records were sometimes contradictory, and in person, he tended to downplay his limitations.

To prepare for the appeal, I interviewed my client; combed through voluminous medical records; solicited a letter of support from his current mental health provider; researched, wrote, and submitted a pre-hearing brief; and developed and practiced direct questioning with the client. Through these conversations with the client and careful review of his medical history, I was able to highlight for the administrative law judge the severity of my client's condition and the concrete ways that his mental illness impaired his functioning in a work setting. Representing my client at the hearing was a harrowing but invaluable experience. I was thrilled for my client when, weeks later, we received notice that our appeal had been

granted and he would be receiving ongoing benefits, plus over \$16,000 in retroactive payments. My client's newfound economic stability means that he is no longer on public assistance. He will be able to live with less anxiety and focus more fully on his mental health treatment.

I am grateful to Equal Justice America for the financial assistance that allowed me to work at SBLS this summer. My internship reinforced my commitment to public interest law and confirmed that a career in civil legal services could be an excellent fit for me. Thank you again for making this opportunity possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chloe Holzman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chloe Holzman
Juris Doctor Candidate, December 2011
The University of Michigan Law School



South
Brooklyn
Legal
Services

Legal
Services NYC

Brooklyn
Branch



Legal
Services NYC

August 25, 2010

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

Re: Chloe Holzman

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for funding Chloe Holzman's work as a summer intern in the HIV Unit at South Brooklyn Legal Services. Ms. Holzman was truly one of the most outstanding interns that we have ever had. Her past experience, particularly at the Partnership for the Homeless, provided her with an understanding of the problems that our clients are facing and the governmental entities which are ostensibly there to assist them. Her success, however, was not merely a result of her familiarity with the landscape of poverty law. She is able to analyze legal issues well and has very strong writing skills. She is able to ascertain the ultimate goal in a case and to take steps to get there on her own, while seeking supervision when she needs assistance. In a hectic general practice, she provided valuable legal assistance in a number of areas, including public benefits, housing, and family law.

Ms. Holzman began the summer by representing a client at a Social Security disability hearing. She prepared a written argument in advance of the hearing and did an excellent job organizing a large amount of medical evidence and arguing the legal bases on which the client should be found eligible for benefits. Ms. Holzman prepared the client for the hearing and conducted a direct examination at the hearing. She subsequently gathered additional documentation sought by the administrative law judge and received a fully favorable decision, resulting in \$1518 per month in Social Security benefits for the client and over \$16,000 in retroactive benefits.

Ms. Holzman also conducted legal research and assisted in the drafting of documents, including a complaint in a divorce case involving domestic violence. She prepared numerous advocacy letters, particularly for benefits related issues. She assisted another attorney in the unit in researching legal issues in several housing cases, including trial preparation in a holdover proceeding. Her work was of the highest caliber in all of these areas.

As her primary supervisor this summer, I was greatly impressed by Ms. Holzman's abilities. She is the type of advocate we strive to hire at SBLS. She provided significant assistance to numerous clients during the course of her summer here and we appreciate the financial support of Equal Justice America in making her internship possible.

Sincerely,

Catherine F. Bowman
HIV Project Director

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John C. Gray, Project Director

Towards justice and dignity for all – Por la justicia y dignidad de todos

