

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

August 29, 2011

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I worked for the Transition Age Foster Youth (TAFY) Unit of Public Counsel's Children's Rights Project (CRP). The attorneys in this unit work with foster youth who are about to "age out" of the system. This population is at very high risk of homelessness after exiting the system and needs help transitioning successfully to independent adulthood. As a law clerk, I performed a wide variety of tasks. For two new clients, I assisted in their intake interviews and wrote case summaries, requested their records, and spotted legal issues while organizing their records. I also organized a college tour of Occidental College and UCLA. Other duties included drafting a memo comparing the duties and authorizations in Public Counsel's and the Superior Court's education attorney agreements. Finally, I wrote a memo recommending a school placement for a youth with special education needs who was moving to a new school district.

One especially exciting project involved assisting the youth in applying for summer jobs that were funded specifically for foster youth by the County. When my co-law clerk and I noticed that the youth were facing similar barriers in the process – primarily difficulty in obtaining the necessary documents, such as their birth certificates and proof of residency – we wrote a policy memo outlining these barriers and making policy recommendations. The County Board of Supervisors took these suggestions seriously and asked the administering organizations to change their policies based on our recommendations. I greatly appreciated the opportunity to see the work I did make a difference in individual lives as well as at a systemic level. Soon after enrolling our youth

in jobs programs, we started to see the impact on their lives. One boy, in particular, was so thrilled to have an “office job” that he showed up three hours early for the first day of orientation, just so that he would not be late and dropped from the program. When his school told him that he needed to turn in missing homework assignments before they would sign his work permit, he completed them immediately.

Reflecting back on the summer as a whole, I am so grateful I had the opportunity to work at Public Counsel this summer. I especially treasured the interaction I had with the youth and appreciated how my supervisors sought to involve me in many different parts of their work. My supervisors took me to an intake interview at a client’s home, an Individualized Education Plan meeting at a school, Drug Court and Juvenile Hall, and Children’s Court for dependency hearings. Moreover, Public Counsel in general was an amazing place to learn, since it offered so many opportunities to serve and to learn in different areas of public interest law: in addition to the required trainings for CRP, I participated in the Skid Row Tour, General Relief Advocacy Program Day, the Foreclosure Rescue Scam Training, and Adoption Day, and I attended talks on legal writing and trial advocacy as well. Most of all, I enjoyed the people at Public Counsel – interns, attorneys, and staff alike – all of whom I found to be incredibly intelligent, committed, and kind.

Thank you for supporting these types of summer experiences. Without the support of organizations like yours, law students might not be able to have these kinds of experiences, which enrich our sense of purpose and responsibility as lawyers.

Sincerely,

Esther Yoo
UCLA School of Law, Class of 2013

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August 31, 2011

Dan Ruben
 Executive Director
 Equal Justice America

Sent Via Email

Re: Equal Justice America Summer Fellow--Esther Yoo

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This letter is to inform you that Esther Yoo has satisfactorily completed her Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship with Public Counsel Law Center.

Public Counsel is the public interest law office of the Los Angeles County and Beverly Hills Bar Associations and the Southern California affiliate of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and the largest pro bono public interest law firm in the nation. Established in 1970, Public Counsel is dedicated to advancing equal justice under law by delivering free legal and social services to indigent and underrepresented children, adults, and families throughout Los Angeles County.

Esther worked specifically in the Children's Rights Project at Public Counsel helping to advocate for high school age foster youth in the areas of education and transition from foster care to independence. Throughout the summer Esther completed several research and writing projects including memoranda on educational options for a specific client and the impact of certain special education curricula on post-secondary education options. She also worked directly with our foster youth clients assisting them with transition planning, college visits and obtaining summer jobs.

Moreover, through her direct work with clients Esther identified certain systemic barriers to foster youth obtaining summer employment. She produced a memorandum identifying these barriers along with recommendations on addressing them. Her memorandum became the basis of our advocacy with Los Angeles County departments who responded positively to our feedback and made swift changes to ensure more foster youth can access valuable skills through summer employment as part of their progress towards self-sufficiency.

As her direct supervisor, I was consistently impressed by Esther and the quality of her work. She was capable and professional. In addition, she demonstrated a sincere desire to learn the substantive areas of law and to explore a legal career in public interest. Finally, her positive attitude and strong communication skills have served her well in her direct client work with foster youth.

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to call me at 213-385-2977 ext. 102 or smcclure@publiccounsel.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan McClure", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Susan McClure
Staff Attorney
Children's Rights Project