

August 25, 2017

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13450 Boundary Rd #204B
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This past summer I had the opportunity to intern with New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), a civil legal services organization in the heart of New York City. I was fortunate enough to accept this position because of the generously funded scholarship I received from Equal Justice America. I wanted to take the time to highlight some of the work that I did this past summer in order to let you and the entire organization know what their efforts contributed to.

At New York Legal Assistance Group, I worked in the Employment Justice Project division. This small but mighty unit takes on employment discrimination, wage and hour, and unemployment insurance cases for underserved populations of New York City and the surrounding area. In working with the individuals who called our intake line to discuss a workplace problem, I was able to help create a timeline of how the events occurred, speak with them regarding what type of action they were looking for, and under the supervision of my attorneys, advise them on the best course of action for them to take. I appreciated the opportunity to work in direct client services. It has strengthened my ability to be an advocate because I have a better grasp on the employment issues individuals may face and an understanding of the obstacles that prevent them from taking action.

Early on this summer, I was tasked with the responsibility to investigate a relatively new Department of Justice procedure which outlines the different identification documents that employers can request of a new employee. When a client, who was a green card holder, was forced to provide more identification than was required, she knew something was wrong. My supervisor had never dealt with a case like this before, so I was asked to do research on a matter of first impression for our unit. This research took me through government websites, webinars, and discussions with DOJ employees. Ultimately, I was able to advise my supervisor and our client of her rights and propel her case forward. The experience of acting as the expert and informing both a client and my supervisor about a legal issue was a thrilling experience as a budding lawyer.

What drew me to the Employment Justice Project at NYLAG was the commitment they had to engaging with alternative dispute resolution processes to reach settlements for their clients. I have both a professional and academic background in mediation, so this is work that I am not unfamiliar with. My background allowed me to work with my supervisor on discrimination and retaliation cases for our clients from an alternative dispute resolution perspective. One case I worked on involved a medical worker who suffered discrimination based on her race and was ultimately fired. When we had the client come into the office, we were able to teach her about the tenants of mediation, help guide her in what the process would look like and determine what

kind of outcomes she could look for, and represent her interests to the opposing counsel when we sat down to mediate. I believe the process provided her the opportunity to speak directly to the individuals who wronged her and gave her control over her own type of legal recourse. Watching this process from the point of view of legal counsel and not that of a neutral fortified my desire to promote alternative dispute resolution practices as a way to unclog the traditional court system.

Thank you again for the financial assistance you provided this summer. Without the contributions that your organization provides, I would not have been able to engage in such meaningful work.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Schwartzman
The George Washington University Law School
Class of 2019



August 17, 2017

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

**Re: Alexandra Schwartzman, Intern at New York Legal Assistance Group
Employment Law Project – Summer 2017**

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing with regards to the service provided by Alexandra Schwartzman during her time as a legal intern in the Employment Law Project at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). I am a staff attorney and current Skadden Fellow at NYLAG and, along with my colleagues Katherine Bromberg and Elissa Devins, had the pleasure of supervising Alexandra over the summer. Alexandra's enthusiasm for public interest work and versatility contributed to a successful internship. We are grateful to Equal Justice America (EJA) for its support of Alexandra as an EJA fellow.

NYLAG's Employment Law Project provides a broad range of services to low-income New Yorkers seeking recourse in employment-related matters. This includes assisting individuals in pursuing claims of employment discrimination, wage and hour violations, and obtaining unemployment benefits. Our services may constitute anything from brief advice and counsel to representation at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the New York State Division of Human Rights, the New York State Department of Labor, the New York City Commission on Human Rights, or federal court. Because our practice is so varied, our interns must be flexible and adept at identifying the issues presented during an initial client interview. This in turn helps us triage cases in order of priority and assess the best course of action for each client. We encourage our interns to take an active role in the case development process. This necessitates a good grasp of the federal, state, and city statutes pertaining to employment rights so that interns can independently conduct intakes, categorize clients' problems, and report back their understanding of the claims to supervisors with their recommendations regarding the viability of the prospective client's claims.

Alexandra was skilled in both making our clients feel heard while nonetheless conducting methodical intakes. As a result, she was always very prepared for team meetings and was able to

present substantive information about prospective cases. Alexandra's willingness to learn and compassion for clients were significant assets to our team. Alexandra's experience as a former mediator was evident in her work at NYLAG. Alexandra employed this skill set in order to distill important information and develop compelling narratives for cases we mediated at the New York City Commission on Human Rights.

In addition to conducting intakes and assessing potential cases, Alexandra drafted demand letters and administrative complaints, and conducted complex legal research on an array of employment law issues. She also drafted memoranda that will be instrumental in future cases, including a research project on the issue of mitigation of damages in employment discrimination cases. Alexandra was an important part of our team this summer and we are grateful to EJA for making this internship possible.

Sincerely,



Nina Martinez
Skadden Fellow/Staff Attorney