

August 21, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

In contrast with my experience over the last two years representing tenants at the East Bay Community Law Center, this past summer I explored affordable housing advocacy at Public Advocates. While I missed the immediacy of eviction defense, I grew to appreciate the important role planning processes and related legal requirements play in providing affordable housing and access to educational and employment opportunities. Working at Public Advocates also clarified that many of the ideas I have studied in planning school often fall short in practice in terms of equity.

My assignments at Public Advocates immersed me in California's Housing Element Law, which we employed both to ensure cities provide their fair share of housing to all income levels and to encourage councils of governments to consider more than environmental objectives when allocating housing throughout the region. These assignments allowed me to dig into public documents such as Housing Elements, Planning Board and City Council minutes, General Plans, and Zoning Ordinances. My job was to read between the lines and establish exactly what strides certain cities were making towards proving low-income housing. Although I was not at Public Advocates to see my work transform into a lawsuit, I am confident my factual research and analysis will help Public Advocates in their efforts to encourage Bay Area municipalities, to allow for housing for a variety of incomes.

In a similar assignment, I researched the legislative history behind the Housing Element statutes in an effort to push the Senate Bill (SB) 375 housing allocation process to include more than simply environmental objectives. The goal of SB 375 is to improve transportation and land use coordination in order to reduce greenhouse gas omissions. While this movement towards "smart growth" or "transit-oriented development" may achieve significant environmental goals, it also encourages the displacement of low-income minorities in central cities and discourages the inclusion of people of color in suburban communities that often have better schools. While I had sensed this disconnect between planning theories and social inequities in reality, Public Advocates and their efforts to shape the SB 375 process helped me once and for all crystallize this dilemma.

I also observed how arduous a task it is fighting for equity objectives in addition to environmental ones and how slow the planning process can be. However, the history of urban planning is full of grand efforts like urban renewal that swept aside the interests of those with less means in order to produce what many believed was progress. After working at Public

Advocates I will be sure to question the most expedient route, even if it is adored by planning academics or looks great in some illustration if it fails to consider how people of all income levels will be impacted.

Sincerely,

Greg Minor
J.D./M.C.P. candidate 2012
University of California, Berkeley School of Law

August 31, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Greg Minor served as a fantastic member of the Public Advocates team this summer. His legal training and experience representing tenants, coupled with his background in urban planning made him an ideal fit for our affordable housing and equitable development program.

During the summer Greg played a key role in fact investigation and legal research relating to local zoning policies in a number of Bay Area cities. Analyzing city planning documents, public hearing minutes, and relevant statutes and cases, Greg put together a comprehensive memorandum describing the jurisdiction's treatment of affordable housing and zoning issues in preparation for potential litigation. He also contributed to our advocacy for more equitable planning at the regional level by analyzing cases and legislative history regarding California's fair share housing laws. Greg's research was thorough and his analysis was strong. Moreover, his clear passion for social justice and equitable land use made him a pleasure to work with.

In return for this great work, Public Advocates strives to provide our summer law clerks with a wide variety of opportunities to help train and support the next generation of public interest advocates. This summer our interns had a chance to observe many aspects of our work, including internal staff meetings, community coalition convenings, and judicial and administrative hearings. We also provided a bus tour of Oakland for students to experience first-hand what it takes to conduct daily activities dependent on public transit. To complement the tour, this summer's interns had an opportunity to meet the named plaintiff in our transportation equity litigation. Further, in order to share our knowledge and experiences with our law clerks, we organized weekly brown bag lunches, covering career-related topics such as federal clerkships and public interest fellowships as well as substantive issues related to our work.

Greg was one of only two students who seized the opportunity to present in our brown bag series. In collaboration with another law clerk, Greg put together an outstanding presentation about his work representing tenants in foreclosed properties, tying together artfully anecdotes from this work, examples of best practices, and information about local and national trends. When we asked our other interns about their favorite presentations from the summer, they consistently ranked Greg's at the top of the list.

We very much appreciated having Greg with us this summer, and we are grateful for your organization's support for his work. Please contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

Sam Tepperman-Gelfant
Staff Attorney