

September 20, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to thank you for my Equal Justice America grant, which allowed me to spend my summer working for The University of Michigan Human Trafficking Clinic this summer. While at the Human Trafficking Clinic, I provided direct legal services to more than a dozen survivors of human trafficking. This ranged from getting them food stamps to securing the documentation that would allow them and their families to continue living in the United States.

Though I considered all of my work at the HTC to be rewarding, the aspect I enjoyed most was client interaction. I found it remarkable to see how much adversity my clients had been able to overcome as a result of their experiences with trafficking, and I felt privileged to be so directly involved in their recovery. My clients tended to be very trusting individuals, and had often been taken advantage of by the people closest to them – including their friends, family members, and romantic partners. Considering this history, it was humbling to see how much faith they were still willing to put in the Human Trafficking; and this made satisfying their expectations especially important.

For me, this became very apparent during my first client meeting. The two clients I met with had been coerced into working as domestic servants at well below the minimum wage and had been compelled into this service by relatives of their close friends in another country. Given the breach of trust that they had experienced, I made it a priority to pay close attention to their goals concerning the possible prosecution of their traffickers. Although it was difficult for me to understand their reluctance to make a stronger case against the accused, I was careful to implement all of the changes they wanted to make to their official declarations and did my best to provide them with the services they needed, and to do so on their own terms.

Unfortunately, this was not always possible. My most difficult case, for instance, involved the harassment of a client's family in Mexico. We had been trying for some time to have the family members relocated to Michigan, but it had been very difficult to secure replacements of important documents from Mexican officials. Because of the delay, one of my client's uncles was killed by members of a Mexican cartel this summer. Given this new evidence of the family's danger, we were ultimately able to get them moved to a safe house and have liaised with an Immigration and Customs Enforcement

agent in Mexico City who appears willing to sponsor the family's relocation to the United States through a grant of Significant Public Benefit Parol. For us, this was an important accomplishment; however, it came too late for my client's uncle, teaching me the need, not just for effective client advocacy, but also for being realistic with clients about their expectations.

Despite the difficulties inherent in the subject matter, my time at the Human Trafficking Clinic was a wonderful opportunity that allowed me to develop a great deal as a student attorney, particularly with regard to client counseling and work management. In the future, I hope to remain closely involved in similar legal aid work. While doing so, I expect that I will continue to draw heavily upon my time at the HTC.

Thank you again for the funding that helped make this experience possible.

Sincerely,

Jacob Styburski  
The University of Michigan Law School  
Class of 2016