

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

September 18, 2011

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am very grateful for the opportunity I was afforded by being awarded an Equal Justice America Summer 2011 Fellowship. The EJA Summer Fellowship allowed me to work at the Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center in San Francisco, helping provide legal services to low-wage workers and their families.

Working in the Community Legal Services Program, I had the opportunity to counsel clients on their employment problems and possible legal solutions. Often I conducted intakes in Spanish and English and evaluated clients' legal claims for potential litigation. This involved identifying the potential legal issues and composing memos for circulation among the staff attorneys.

I had the opportunity to represent several clients in unemployment insurance appeals hearings and received favorable decisions for my clients. I also represented clients at wage and hour conferences and hearings before the Labor Commissioner. I truly cherished these experiences for allowing me to further develop my oral advocacy skills while representing my client's interests to the best of my ability. Hearings often involved the opportunity to conduct direct examination, cross examination, and make a closing statement. I really valued these opportunities since they allowed me to advocate on behalf of my client, while developing the skills I will need to be an effective lawyer in the future.

Although opportunities to represent clients at hearings were perhaps my most enjoyable summer experiences, I also enjoyed preparing clients for hearings when an advocate was not available for full representation. Often clients felt very empowered simply by learning more about their rights and the intricacies of the law as they applied to the individual case. After representing themselves at hearings, clients would often call me to tell me what a great experience it was to advocate on their own behalf. For all of the cases where decisions had been rendered by the close of my clerkship, the clients had attained favorable outcomes by advocating for themselves on their own. It was a truly empowering experience for them, and I was grateful to be a part of it.

I also had the opportunity to investigate unemployment insurance appeals systems in other states, and composed a memo as part of a task-force proposal to Governor Jerry Brown on budget-conscious alternatives to the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board (CUIAB). I researched changing areas of employment and labor law and updated the Workers' Rights Clinic Advocates' Manual accordingly. In addition, I had the opportunity to compose written argument for a second-level appeal before the CUIAB, which involved reviewing the hearing record and conducting the relevant legal research.

I am truly grateful for my summer experience at the Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center. I could not have had this tremendous opportunity without the help of an EJA Summer Fellowship. Now I am fully committed to pursuing a career in public interest law.

With gratitude,

Coreen Kopper
UC Berkeley, Boalt Hall