Candidate

Alt. Phone: 
Email: 

Graduation (actual or expected): May 2020
Applying for other fellowships or clerkship: Yes
Primary Language: English
What other languages do you speak: 
Preferred Pronouns: She, her

Proposal

Subject Area Classification: Children/Youth
Project and Target Population: Provide client-centered legal representation and systemic advocacy, to ensure that adolescent youth in congregate care have significant connections to adults when they age out of foster care.

Host Organization

https://
Phone: 
Fax: 

Executive Director: 
Supervisor: Deputy Attorney-in-Charge
Part I. Project Description

Statement of Need

For older youth in foster care, family is a rare form of justice.

New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) has normalized the practice of discharging older youth from foster care without any permanent connection to an adult. Without social support, these youth are vulnerable to life-threatening influences such as survival sex, gang involvement, trafficking, intimate partner violence, living on the streets, and potentially permanent engagement in underground economies. Studies suggest that independent living skills training is not effective to stabilize youth upon discharge. However, research shows that at least one stable relationship with a committed, caring adult is the single most common factor in youth who develop resilience.

Discharging youth without families is not just a moral failure; it is a legal violation with a legal remedy. Foster care agencies must make reasonable efforts towards the permanency goal that the Family Court sets for each child in foster care. Youth with the goal, Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), never achieve permanent family. The law requires agencies to ensure that youth with an APPLA goal have at least one “significant connection” to an adult who can provide guidance and assistance.

In New York City in 2018, 908 foster youth had an APPLA permanency goal. Of the 649 youth who aged out of foster care without family that year, 52% had no permanent connection to a caring adult. Longstanding data on unfulfilled “significant connections” demonstrate that ACS will not satisfy this statutory mandate without legal action. Moreover, JRP attorneys attest that “significant connections” can be a boilerplate formality. Therefore, most older youth achieve neither family, nor the proxy for family that Congress intends.

This urgent need is met by a rare opportunity. The 1,214 older youth who are isolated in congregate care settings in and around New York City require specialized, holistic legal advocacy to enable the formation of relationships. The Family First Act, in effect in 2021, will require the deinstitutionalization of a substantial population of these youth into family foster homes, giving them a greater chance to access significant adult relationships. These clients must be represented by a dedicated fellow, whose frequent contact would build both a high level of trust, and the opportunity to deeply understand and mitigate barriers to successful transition to the community.

Project Goals

The overall project goal is to use a comprehensive litigation and advocacy strategy to compel ACS to create family-like “significant connections” for youth with APPLA goals.

Direct Representation: As the primary attorney for the child, the fellow would work in the Bronx JRP office to take on complex cases where APPLA goals are identified, particularly ones that require more individualized client counseling. The fellow would focus on litigating reasonable efforts toward “significant connections,” and foster home placements for youth without a clinical need to be in highly restrictive congregate care settings, pursuant to the Family First Act. As a consultant, the fellow would assist JRP attorneys to address barriers to familial or family-like relationships for identified clients.

Internal Resource Development: The fellow would develop model motions to seek orders directing ACS
to conduct comprehensive searches for relatives and community resources, expedite clearances of potential resources, fund travel, visitation, and other bonding activates between the adult connection and the foster youth. Intervention could happen at crucial times: 1) at the outset, when APPLA goals are assigned, or when a client moves to congregate care; and 2) on an ongoing basis, to order more frequent agency efforts than what is required for bi-annual Family Team Conferences and permanency hearings. Self-advocacy tools for clients will be created in collaboration with JRP’s Adolescent Practice Team. The fellow would facilitate city-wide JRP training, introducing the expertise of youth advocates.

Community Partnerships: The fellow would consult with ACS’s Older Youth Services Unit, Wendy’s Wonderful Kids and You Gotta Believe, which provide supportive services to older youth. The fellow would introduce clients to youth advocates from these organizations, who can serve as credible liaisons to help establish family-like relationships.

Systemic Advocacy: The fellow would support SLLRU and ongoing long-term investigation.

The lasting impact of the project will be accomplished in two main arenas. The project will: (1) provide tools and education to JRP attorneys representing youth with APPLA goals and in congregate care and (2) create the necessary programming to ensure that no youth ages out of foster care alone.

Two-Year Timeline

0-6 Months:
- Participate in Legal Aid’s comprehensive training for all new JRP attorneys
- Begin direct representation of youth with APPLA goals, under supervision
- Conduct permanency hearings and develop thorough records for Article 78 actions
- Research and review statutes, regulations, case law, Article 78 actions, contempt motions, ACS policies and practices regarding “significant connections” for older youth
- FOIL ACS policies and internal guidelines to determine, among other things, whether ACS follows its own guidelines
- Initiate relationships with non-legal service providers, ACS and private agencies, particularly those who operate RTCs.

6 - 12 Months:
- Provide direct representation to up to 40 clients with supervision, taking on more complex cases where APPLA goals are identified
- Litigate reasonable efforts in Family Court permanency hearings and appeal adverse rulings
- Incorporate legal research into client advocacy
- Develop strategies and practice tools for cases where APPLA is the goal
- Develop checklists and model questions for permanency hearings where APPLA is the goal
- Develop system for tracking data on “significant connections”
- Re-FOIL ACS policies and internal guidelines, as needed
- Synthesize uncovered facts from direct representation of youth in RTCs
- Reflect on Year 1 accomplishments and growth opportunities, re-assess Year 2 plans to ensure that the work relates closely to client needs.
- Continue all other efforts

12 - 18 Months: - Provide direct representation to up to 60 clients, taking on more complex cases where APPLA goals are identified
- Begin drafting a class action lawsuit to compel ACS to develop programs to ensure that no youth ages out of foster care alone
- Bring Article 78 proceedings on behalf of individual clients where ACS is violating its own policy and procedures in arbitrary and capricious ways
- Conduct trainings on “significant connections” in all five borough offices
- Develop model motions for ordering agency efforts related to “significant connections”
- Develop resource manual by consulting with JRP social workers, the Adolescent Practice Team (APT), non-legal partner organizations to create a list of resources and services to support “significant connections”
- Execute short-term discrete tasks to support SLLRU’s systemic advocacy, such as City Council testimony, writing letters to ACS, and sitting in on ACS Older Youth Services committee meetings
- Continue all other efforts

18 - 24 Months:
- Provide direct legal services to up to 60 clients, and measure outcomes of agency efforts toward “significant connections”
- Conduct trainings for Family Court players outside of JRP
- Support SLLRU’s systemic advocacy, such as City Council testimony, writing letters to ACS, and sitting in on ACS Older Youth Services committee meetings
- Continue on Year 2 accomplishments and create a plan for the long-term stability of the project
- Continue all other efforts

Distinction Between Project and Existing Services

There are no services currently provided that address the need of the community to be served.

Community Collaboration

This project will draw on the partnership and lived experience of You Gotta Believe youth advocates. As mentors, trainers, legislative advocates, and trusted allies, they are credible resources to both institutional players and foster youth unlike anyone else. These trusted partners are essential collaborators, especially with JRP clients who have been repeatedly told implicitly and explicitly that family is not possible for them. Older JRP clients who have experienced increased levels of disrupted relationships will require advocates like these, with a high level of skill, commitment and trust in order to achieve project goals.

Moreover, the fellow will work with Wendy’s Wonderful Kids and the Older Youth Services and Residential Care Monitoring Units within ACS’s Division of Family Permanency Services. The fellow will forge ground to meet mutual goals between organizations and intervene with the adversarial system when collaboration is not successful.

The project will draw from ongoing relationships with progressive legal organizations that are employing innovative litigation strategies in child welfare systems nationally. Advocates in the Juvenile Law Center in Philadelphia have expressed the desire to share research memos and develop ideas for advancing a more robust interpretation of “reasonable efforts” for youth with APPLA goals.

Potential Sponsor Involvement

The Legal Aid Society has a long history of including pro bono attorneys in their practice model. Accordingly, including sponsor attorneys would be a natural component of the project. Pro bono attorneys could assist in monitoring ACS’s compliance with reasonable efforts toward “significant connections.” This would be accomplished by gathering data from full time staff attorneys about agency efforts with clients. Pro bono attorneys could also assist in drafting motions to order ACS to deliver many tasks that support the development of these relationships, such as compelling case records, ordering clearances, and funding travel and visitation. Sponsor involvement could aid the development of attorney resources and trainings for the project, including research and drafting. The project would offer opportunities to engage in research on the harm suffered by youth who are discharged without connection to a caring adult. Finally, the fellow will periodically update the sponsor on the project’s progress, and will seek feedback as the project evolves.
Candidate Pro Bono Experience

Part II. Candidate’s Personal Statement

Personal Statement

My personal and professional experiences, and my connection to coalition builders in the community, will enable me to execute this project.

My advocacy as a foster parent to adolescent youth has contextualized the unique harms that older youth encounter in their struggle to survive in the system. My first foster child, [redacted], died by suicide at age 17. My grief after his devastating loss was a call to action. After he died, I demanded his agency answer for the ways they neglected his mental health needs, as I had observed with panic while he was in my care. The agency director claimed, “we did everything we could for him.” His words sparked two revelations that fuel my life-long commitment to this legal advocacy. One, child welfare agencies have interests that are, at times, adverse to the interests of youth in their care, a conflict that can result in life-threatening harm. Two, older youth in care encounter a unique, invisible age discrimination. The system scapegoats older foster youth for its own failure: where there are insufficient foster homes, youth are labeled “hard to place,” where services are poor quality, youth are “non-compliant” for rejecting them.

After witnessing a culture of systemic dysfunction, apathy and blame shifting, I advocated for improved mental health services directly with Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), with New York City’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and with Thrive NYC Founder Chirlane McCray. While this outreach solidified my advocacy expertise, its effect was limited without the law. Only the law can compel ACS to honor youths’ humanity. Today, my permanent relationship with my pre-adoptive daughter enables us to innovate solutions to some of her most dangerous challenges. In this project, my lived experience positions me to credibly request commitment from identified adults in my clients’ lives. I know the complexity of this role, and the immense resources it requires.

In my professional experience, I have seen how the law can address harm in two ways: one, it can provide immediate, direct relief, and two, it can be restructured to ameliorate the sources of these harms at the outset. In two JRP offices, I gained the advocacy skills and substantive knowledge that this project requires. In JRP’s Brooklyn Trial Office, I drafted motions, researched benefits and case law, counseled clients, and advocated in court for their urgent unmet needs. In JRP’s Special Litigation and Law Reform Unit this summer, I crafted solutions for systemic issues, such as draft letters for ACS policy changes. I also contributed to long-term structural change by creating protocols to implement new JRP projects, and through legal research for potential class action litigation.

Finally, I have substantial experience partnering with some of the community organizations that will ensure this project lives on beyond the fellowship term. I have a strong working relationship with You Gotta Believe!, a New York City non-profit that finds committed families for older foster youth. I have participated in their community outreach initiatives, on panel discussions in their foster parent trainings and in City Council testimony on their behalf. I have also collaborated closely with workers at ACS, contracted agencies, and Wendy’s Wonderful Kids, who are all tasked with connecting youth to adults. In sum, I can clearly envision how to carve ground for this project in the child welfare landscape in NYC.
Part I. Host Organization Background

Total Number of Attorneys on Staff

JRP has 201 total attorneys, 50 in the Bronx office.

Previous Experience Hosting Equal Justice Works Fellows

Yes, we have experience hosting fellows.

Pro Bono Experience

Whether through individual representation of an at-risk client, answering calls on the “Access to Benefits” Helpline, or bringing groundbreaking civil rights litigation, The Legal Aid Society’s Pro Bono Practice annually provides over 3,200 volunteers with training, supervision and mentorship which allow them to deliver life-changing legal assistance to thousands of Legal Aid clients each year.

Working with legal professionals from New York’s major law firms, corporate law departments as well as students from both New York and national law schools, The Legal Aid Society helps secure the fundamental legal rights of low-income New Yorkers in critical need of counsel but unable to afford it. Annually, our pro bono partners provide invaluable legal assistance to our City’s most vulnerable residents – homeless and imminently homeless children and adults, senior citizens, unemployed and low-wage workers, children and adults with chronic illnesses and disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, immigrants, neglected or abused children, and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

The Legal Aid Society integrates volunteers into its overall delivery of civil legal services. All pro bono referrals are made on behalf of Legal Aid’s clients, whose cases have been screened by our attorneys for legal merit and financial eligibility. In the overwhelming majority of cases, Legal Aid continues as Attorney of Record, and law firms and their attorneys serve as Of Counsel. A Legal Aid attorney remains on the case as a mentor until final disposition. All volunteers handling Legal Aid cases are covered by the Society’s professional liability coverage.

Part II. Candidate Relationship with Host Organization

Candidate Experience at Host Organization

Ms. [redacted] interned with the JRP Brooklyn Trial Court office in the summer of 2018 and with JRP’s Special Litigation and Law Reform Unit in the summer of 2019. Her passion for the work and respect for clients evinced a strong understanding of JRP’s mission and culture. Jamien Weddle, the Deputy Attorney-in-Charge of the Bronx JRP Office, who also serves as the director of the Adolescent Practice Team, will serve as the project supervisor. Though Ms. [redacted] and Mr. Weddle have not yet met in person, they are in agreement as to the goals of the fellowship and are eager to begin implementation. Ms. [redacted] is well acquainted with our Adolescent Practice Team members, who will provide mentorship and collaboration during her fellowship.

Ms. [redacted] starting salary will be $53,582 which will increase to $62,730 once she is admitted to the NY State Bar. The Society’s staff attorney benefits package includes but is not limited to paid holidays, vacation and personal leave up to 5 weeks; health insurance inclusive of dental and vision benefits and
Part III. Project Background

Conception of Project and Its Relationship to Mission of Host Organization

JRP provides representation to over 30,000 children and youth in child protective, juvenile delinquency and "persons in need of supervision" (PINS) proceedings in New York City's five family courts, representing approximately 90% of youth involved in Family Court proceedings. In the past, JRP has taken steps to address deficiencies in various areas of child and family services, like education, psychiatric hospitalization and interstate compact issues, by creating specialized programs through fellowship funding.

Ms. [redacted] project aims to address the disparities that older youth experience in foster care. Her project will focus on the unmet legal needs of youth living in congregate care settings and youth with APPLA goals, who will age out of the system without families. She will focus on direct representation of individual clients, and she will build on existing systemic advocacy and litigation based on her findings. This hybrid model will offer the opportunity for closer working relationships between Ms. [redacted] and clients in residential treatment centers ("RTCs"), whose isolation outside New York City creates significant barriers to direct representation by JRP staff attorneys. Moreover, their complex trauma from histories of abuse and neglect necessitate greater contact and long-term advocacy in order to build trust. Ms. [redacted] will consult with other JRP attorneys citywide and will collaborate with JRP's Adolescent Practice Team ("APT") and JRP's Special Litigation and Law Reform Unit ("SLLRU") to develop strategies for systemic legal reform [redacted]. This advocacy will respond to agencies’ failures when addressing the needs of this population and decrease barriers for youth to access permanent relationships with adults.

For many years, our Adolescent Practice Team has worked to ensure legal protections for older youth in foster care. This fellowship will expand our commitment to serving this population by providing intense, specialized representation to individual youth. By developing education materials, trainings, and advocacy tools for JRP attorneys, Ms. [redacted] will ensure that our practice is aware of barriers to "significant connections" among older youth and the best practices to assist them in building permanent relationships with adults. Ms. [redacted] project could serve as a national model to strengthen agency reasonable efforts toward "significant connections."

Part IV. Supervisor Information

Supervisor's Expertise in Project Subject Area

Jamien Weddle has been an attorney at JRP since 2006. He joined APT as a staff attorney in 2008 when the project was expanded to the 5 borough offices from its original pilot in Manhattan. He remained as the Bronx APT staff attorney until 2016 when he was promoted to become an Assistant-Attorney-in-Charge. Since then he has supervised the APT team in the Bronx. In 2018, he was promoted to Deputy AIC.

Supervisor's Experience Managing Staff

In June 2018, Jamien Weddle became the Deputy Attorney-in-Charge of the Bronx JRP office. In addition to supporting the Attorney-in-Charge in overseeing the office, he directly supervises a team of ten attorneys and support professionals, including the Adolescent Practice Team (APT), which specializes in the representation of older youth in foster care. Prior to his current position, Mr. Weddle served as an
Assistant Attorney-in-Charge for two years, managing a team of staff attorneys of varying experience, including the close supervision and professional development of three new attorneys.

**Supervisor's Proposed Interaction with Fellow**

After Ms.  completes JRP’s 6 week intensive training program, she will meet with Mr. Weddle on a weekly basis and more if necessary. These meetings will continue for the entirety of the fellowship. Additionally, Ms.  will meet with the supervising attorneys of the Adolescent Practice Team as well as JRP’s SLLRU on a bi-weekly to monthly basis and as needed to take necessary advocacy steps to decrease barriers for foster youth trying to access “significant connections” and to further systemic advocacy.
EDUCATION

J.D. expected, May 2020
Public Interest Merit Scholarship.

B.F.A. in Printmaking, 2008
European Honors Program, Rome, Italy.
Honors Program, Merit Scholarship.

EXPERIENCE

Mobilization for Justice, New York, NY
Legal Intern, Kinship Caregiver Law Project. Operate intake hotline, research and draft petitions.

The Legal Aid Society - Juvenile Rights Practice, New York, NY
Legal Intern, Special Litigation and Law Reform Unit. Supported lead attorneys in ongoing long-term investigations and anticipated class action litigation through legal research, memo writing and potential plaintiff counseling. Assisted informal systemic advocacy and implementation of new project protocols.

Main Street Legal Services, Long Island City, NY
Legal Intern, Student Advocacy Project. Supported education advocacy in a clinic that represented New York City K-12 public school students in superintendent suspension hearings.

The Legal Aid Society - Juvenile Rights Practice, Brooklyn, NY
Legal Intern, Brooklyn Trial Office. Researched legal issues, drafted motions, digested case records, and witnessed interviews to support supervisors’ child protective legal advocacy. Observed courtroom litigation and appeared on the record for permanency hearings. Advocated for clients’ mental health, medical, educational and social needs.

Creative Director and CEO. Founded womens contemporary handbag brand with domestic and international customer base in wholesale and retail markets.

IMPACT Director. Developed training program and employed survivors of human trafficking together with New York Asian Women’s Center. Built trust with survivors in an innovative program designed to foster personal growth through relationships, training and employment.

RAINN, New York, NY
Counselor Advocate. Counseled survivors of sexual assault and referred them to resources.

Prison Education Initiative, Rikers Island, NY
Instructor. Lead weekly courses in Fashion Theory, Women’s Studies and Studio Art for women in the Rose M. Singer Center on Rikers Island. Facilitated introduction of non-hierarchical learning paradigm. Designed the organization’s website nypei.org, and all branding, promotional and print materials.

Peace Over Violence, Los Angeles, CA
Counselor Advocate. Counseled survivors of sexual assault through a 24 hour hotline and in hospital visits. Connected survivors to relevant resources, participated in trainings on trauma-informed topics.

Aviva Family and Children’s Services, Los Angeles, CA
Instructor. Lead bi-weekly apparel construction workshops in a group home for adolescent girls, in partnership with the resident art therapist, to offer a creative route to healing and growth.

Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles, CA
Printer. Assisted artists during their residency in the premier print publishing house of Los Angeles.
September 9, 2019

RE: [Redacted]
Fellowship Applicant

Dear Equal Justice Works Fellowship Selection Committee:

It is a great pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for [Redacted] who is applying for an EJW fellowship to support her work in litigating to meet the needs of youth aging out of foster care. There are few populations as vulnerable as the older foster care youth [Redacted] proposes to serve, and [Redacted] is uniquely prepared to work with this population. I therefore offer my highest recommendation for her and hope you are able to support this much needed project.

I have had the great pleasure to teach [Redacted] in both her first and second year of law school. [Redacted] was a student in my large Criminal Law class during her first year of law school and she took the interlinked Trial Advocacy and Student Advocacy Project Clinic courses during the spring of her 2L year. [Redacted] is brilliant and earned top grades in all three classes. More importantly, she is hard-working, patient, creative, supportive of her peers, and is organized and thorough enough do excellent work even when managing tremendous stresses outside her work. It’s not entirely clear to me how [Redacted] does it, but while managing external pressures that would have led others to seek an extension, miss class, or be unprepared, she was always prepared, her work showed great care, and she was able to support classmates who were less organized and prepared. In Trial Advocacy and Student Advocacy Project Clinic, there are daily simulations and daily assignments that must be turned in but are not graded. Some students put in a lot of work and get a lot out of these assignments, [Redacted] was among these students. Her final trial, simulated advocacy work (we did not get enough suspension cases for all students to get one and I knew that she was already in a position to do this type of advocacy in the real world), class presentation, and research and writing were all beautiful. I have taught many students and [Redacted] is one of the best organized, most effective, and diligent I have ever seen. Her written work was beautifully researched, her analysis was sharp, and her final memos and papers highly persuasive. She is also thoughtful and kind and will be the perfect advocate for vulnerable youth and a great colleague.

[Redacted] project is also well worth supporting. She proposes to bring a new level of service to the adolescents who are in congregate care settings or who have APPLA (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement) goals. As she notes in her application, according to ACS over half of these youth do not have the “significant connection” with an adult that Congress requires and for those who allegedly have a “significant connection” this is often in name only. During the time I have known [Redacted] she has tirelessly worked to provide the kind of
supports foster youth and the adults who support them need and who can provide permanent commitments.

The proposed placement collaborating with Legal Aid’s Juvenile Rights Practice’s Adolescent Practice Team and their Special Litigation and Law Reform Unit will be ideal. She will benefit from excellent training and supervision, she will be in a position to provide extensive direct advocacy for youth with APPLA goals and those aging out of residential care, and she will be able to share her expertise and model motions with attorney. Legal Aid (where I worked as a paralegal and an attorney) has a robust history of developing good practices and doing internal trainings that swiftly replicate innovative advocacy. The Special Litigation Unit will also be able to pursue broader challenges to agency inaction to protect these youth. She is already involved with the community groups and ACS resources that support parents of older foster children and will be able to combine direct advocacy, training, impact litigation if necessary, and community resources to make a tremendous impact for youth aging out of foster care. Although she proposes to work in NYC, her project may well provide a model for advocacy across the country.

I’ve rarely had a student as talented, smart, diligent, and mature as [name]. Her project is critically needed to support vulnerable youth and she is an ideal EJW Fellow to address this need. I hope you take the opportunity to interview her and are able to support her project.

If you have any questions, feel free to call me at [phone number].

Sincerely,

K. Babe Howell
Professor
September 11, 2019

Equal Justice Works
Fellowship Selection Committee
1730 M. Street NW Suite 1010
Washington DC, 20036-4511

Re: Letter of Recommendation for

Dear Fellowship Selection Committee:

I wish to convey my vigorous support for Equal Justice Works Fellowship application. I had the opportunity to supervise Ms. during her internship in the Special Litigation and Law Reform Unit (SLLRU) of The Legal Aid Society’s Juvenile Rights Practice (JRP) during the summer of 2019. I believe that her combination of skills, intelligence, work ethic, lived experience and commitment to JRP’s client population will make her a stellar social justice attorney who will be a tremendous asset to JRP’s mission.

As the Director of the Special Litigation and Law Reform Unit, for the past eight years, I have supervised dozens of law students, each with impressive resumes and a passion for social justice. truly stands out. This summer, she effectively navigated multiple complex legal assignments with confidence and ease. For example, she was asked to write a legal research memo on the relevant standards for preliminary injunctions for class action lawsuits in the Second Circuit. She quickly uncovered relevant case law, and wrote an exceptionally clear, concise and well-organized memo that thoroughly addressed the issue. Moreover, she showed initiative by using her strong visualization and organizational skills to enhance resources for JRP staff. This effort demonstrated her ability to lead and execute a project with a high level of efficiency and attention to detail.

Moreover, because of her lived experience with our client population, I was able to engage in critical dialogue with regarding one of our ongoing investigations. She offered a unique and interesting perspective on our work, a perspective particularly rare in the niche area of child welfare law in which we practice. This depth of understanding will contribute significantly to her advocacy in child welfare. The older client population she seeks to serve requires are often challenging to effectively engage, however she demonstrated during her internship well-honed skills in this area in client counseling. commitment to our older teen client population is

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incredibly impressive and is what motivated her to redirect her career to pursue the law. Simply put, this work is not an academic or intellectual exercise for her, rather, it is central to her personal and professional mission.

Ms. [redacted] proposed project dovetails with the ongoing investigation our unit is conducting into [redacted]. The high needs and the physical isolation of many of these youth combine to make them even more vulnerable to aging out of foster care without a stable, loving and permanent significant connection to assist them. Ensuring that these young people have such a connection would dramatically improve their successful transition to adulthood. Ms. [redacted] highly unusual skill set makes her the perfect person to address the long-neglected, systemic shortcomings in identifying and fostering these connections.

I have no doubt that Ms. [redacted] has what it takes to be a dedicated, successful social justice attorney. She approaches this work with a keen intelligence, sensitivity, and hope. I am confident she can execute a fellowship project that requires a high level of skill to navigate complex dynamics in the law, in a high needs client population and among a diverse NYC-based web of institutional players. Please feel free to contact me directly if you would like to discuss Ms. [redacted] candidacy further. My email is [redacted] and my direct office line is [redacted]

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Lisa Freeman

Justice in Every Borough.