December 14, 2015

Layla P. O’Conner, Esq.

Director of Recruitment

Miami Law Department

800 Apple Drive

Miami, FL 33101

Dear Ms. O’Conner:

I am a current 1L at Harvard Law School writing to apply for the Summer Honors Program at the Miami Law Department. As a child growing up in Seattle, I always assumed that cities just happened. People decided to live close to one-another and the rest just figured itself out. That, of course, isn’t true. What a city is and does depends on what its citizens expect and how much legal power they wield, which I believe is both a significant restraint and an enormous opportunity for societal change.

During my undergraduate studies, I volunteered every Saturday as a language tutor for new Americans. I learned a great deal and enjoyed helping the people I worked with integrate into their new home. As I spoke with them, I came to realize how much city services made that difficult integration easier. They took public transit to the public library for language classes, their children played at the city recreation centers, not to mention the health resources the city provided and the rental by-laws they relied on. Local government played a substantial role in making their lives better, and I resolved to learn more about improving the ways cities serve their citizens.

During my work with the American Policy Center, I studied the potential implementation of living-wage laws within the Seattle region, which demonstrated one of the ways cities can be the center of policy innovation and look after their citizens. As an intern for a Member of Congress, I had the tremendous opportunity to do substantive policy research and work with the Congressmen’s office as lead drafter on a piece of legislation. I also interacted with constituents and tried to help them with their issues. Often the problem they raised to their Representative – a zoning complaint, a pothole that needed fixing, a waste issue, a small business question -- fell within the jurisdiction of local government; I did what I could and directed them accordingly. I was also exposed to constant requests of city governments asking the federal government to support their ever-expanding responsibilities. As cities bear an increasing burden and continue to affect every aspect of our day-to-day lives, ensuring that they are legally and financially empowered is essential.

Further exploration into the nature of local government with the Harvard Law Urbanists has only reinforced the importance local government plays in all of our lives. How we conceive of cities and the legal powers we give them fundamentally shapes our society — whether your neighbors are simply the people you live beside or your partners in creating economically successful, inclusive spaces. I want to be part of ensuring cities have the tools they need to be better, fairer places. For this reason, I am excited to apply to the Miami Law Department; to learn about the legal framework of cities in a city I love. I am particularly interested in working for the Legal Counsel Division because I believe it offers an excellent chance to combine my passion for cities and their relationship with other governments with my fascination with policy. I cannot imagine a better way to spend a summer. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Troy Adams