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Discrimination Against Homeschool Students in Florida and How to Resolve It

People often view discrimination as something that occurs based on gender, race, or sexual orientation, but what about discrimination based on education? Homeschooling is based upon the parents' right to educate their child as they see fit. Some main issues include supplies associated with certain classes, the ability to join clubs, and the decreased number of credits homeschoolers may take under dual-enrollment programs. Discrimination against homeschool students in the state of Florida K through University system is not a rare occurrence. To resolve this issue, colleges and public schools need to allow the same number of credits for both homeschool and public school dual-enrolled students, to provide homeschool students vocational and advanced courses, and to encourage homeschool students to take part in clubs and honor societies regardless of connection to a class.

Homeschool students are often discriminated against in the public school and college systems in Florida. Florida has the Equal Access law, which states, "Home educated students are eligible to take part in the public school's interscholastic extracurricular activities." While this is the case, counties determine and interpret the regulations they make. Because of this, many counties only allow students to take part in classes or after-school activities if they attend the school for a certain number of hours. This excludes homeschool students, who opt to work at home for most of their subjects and activities. Homeschool students often work more than

public-school students, and their parents pay the same taxes as others. For these reasons, they should have the same access to schools as public-school students, even if they choose not to use it.

Colleges should allow homeschool and public-school dual-enrolled students to take the same number of credits per college semester. As of now, Broward College only allows dual-enrolled homeschoolers to take at most 11 credits per semester, while public-school students have the option to enroll in College Academy, which requires at least 12 credits per semester. Elana Silva, a writer for New America Weekly, states in her article "The State of Homeschooling in America," "Moving quickly through high school is a common goal among homeschoolers, who seek and use dual-credit options to graduate early from high school and sometimes earn associate's or even bachelor's degrees at the same time." Because many homeschoolers move ahead in school for early graduation, they should be allowed to take as many credits as dual-enrolled public-school students. I am a 15-year-old dual-enrolled homeschooler and work as hard as any dual-enrollment student in public school. To receive my AA degree from Broward College by the time I graduate high school, I must CLEP out of courses and take courses over the summer. This results in me working harder than those in College Academy, and I should be able to join the program as easily as public-school students. To resolve this, public schools and colleges should allow homeschoolers into the same programs as public-school students so they can take more credits.

Public schools and colleges should allow homeschool students to take vocational and advanced courses. Homeschoolers may be interested in a wider range of subjects or ahead in their schooling. In a study conducted by Sahar Almasoud and Samantha R. Fowler of the Florida Institute of Technology, it was found that the GPA of homeschool students was higher than that

of non-homeschooled students. Because of the wider range of education provided by homeschooling, there is more opportunity to grow; the need for higher end specialized classes arises. In many cases, the supplies and expertise needed to teach these classes goes beyond textbooks used in homeschooling. In my high school life, I wanted to take a full lab course, yet I never had the materials for it. I took biology through FLVS, but I never did many hands-on labs, which would have helped my understanding for my college biology lab class. For this reason, public schools and colleges should permit homeschool students to take vocational and advanced courses.

Public schools and colleges should allow and encourage homeschool students to participate in clubs and honor societies. Clubs and honor societies in public schools often require homeschool students to meet impossible requirements. This is discriminatory to the homeschoolers. Christina Sim Keddie suggests in her proposal, "Homeschoolers and Public school Facilities: Proposals for Providing Fairer Access," that many homeschoolers do not have the means to participate in band or drama courses and clubs, as there are not enough people in the homeschool community around them. It is much harder for participation in sports to occur. Homeschooling can be limiting in these ways. Her observations hold true in many homeschooling communities in Florida. It is much harder for homeschoolers to take part in sports and clubs outside of community groups. Honor societies hardly exist. In my own homeschool community, there are no clubs or honor societies. I would be part of a creative writing club or book club if they were available to me, and I would be part of an honor society. In the homeschool world, such things are scarce. Because of this, homeschool students should be allowed to participate in public school and college clubs and honor societies, with no restricting requirements.

If public schools and colleges implemented these changes, colleges would see an uptick in dual enrolled homeschool students. More students would enjoy advanced courses, increasing their need for a higher education. Homeschool students would see more of the outside world when joining clubs, better preparing them for the workforce. To implement these crucial changes, allow any student, including homeschool students, with eligible grades to enter Broward College Academy. Allow homeschool students to participate in classes as easily as public-school students and make a plan to include it in their transcript. Finally, allow homeschool students to participate in clubs and honor societies without regard for taking any courses at the school or college hosting the club. Implementing these changes will allow homeschool students to have as much opportunity as public-school students.

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