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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-3311

June 23, 2016

Mrs. Beth F. Cobert  
Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
1900 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20415-1000

Dear Acting Director Cobert:

I write to express concern regarding a recent USA Jobs Announcement that appeared to disadvantage students who use custom curriculum plans to enhance their educational attainment.

On November 18, 2015, the Announcement for the Don Pathways Internship Program—Student Trainee (Engineer), Naval Sea Systems Command, opened for applications; it included the following requirement: applicants must have attended a “high school whose curriculum has been approved by a state or local governing body, or [used] a home-school curriculum that has been approved by such a body or a state...”

Federal job qualifications should follow federal law, and federal law does not require graduates to use a state “approved” curriculum. Instead, Congress has made clear that if a home-educated graduate completes his or her education in compliance with his or her state’s education laws, then that graduate is eligible for federal benefits ranging from eligibility for federal financial aid to enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces. In fact, no requirement similar to the USA Jobs Announcement exists in any state statute, making it impossible for home-educated graduates to comply.

Many families home-educate their children to ensure curricula are finely tailored to maximize each student’s potential. Without broad flexibility to personalize curricula, the educational development of many children would be hindered. Congress has long recognized—in federal law—that families are better positioned than states to decide what kind of educational curriculum will help students flourish.

Consider the following laws regarding federal benefits and educational autonomy:

- In 1998, Congress amended the Higher Education Act to ensure that homeschool graduates were eligible for federal financial aid. The law states that students who have “completed a secondary school education in a home school setting that is treated as a home school or private school under state law” are eligible to receive federal financial aid. (Pub. L. No. 105-244, § 483, codified at 20 U.S.C. § 1091(d)(3)).

- In 2008, Congress again amended the Higher Education Act to modify the Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program. Part of this change included language to ensure that homeschool graduates were eligible for this scholarship. 20 U.S.C.A. § 1070d-36(a) states that students who are “graduate[s] of a public or private secondary school (or a home school, whether treated as a home school or a private school under State law)...” are eligible for these scholarships.
- In 2011, Congress passed the FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) as Public Law 112-81. Section 532 of this law modified Department of Defense enlistment policy to allow homeschool graduates to enlist just like any other secondary school graduate. All that was required was that the high school student “otherwise completes a program of secondary education in compliance with the education laws of the State in which the person resides.” (P.L. 112-81 § 532(a)(2)(B)).

I trust that you will kindly ensure future USA Job Announcements do not include educational qualifications that disqualify graduates who seek educational development outside of brick-and-mortar schools. In future announcements, perhaps more practicable high school education requirements could be used. For example, a job announcement might ask homeschool graduates to show a homeschool-issued high school diploma, or proof that they were educated in compliance with their state’s education laws.

In sum, requiring state-sanctioned curriculum is at odds with federal law and would rob the Navy of some of our nation’s best and brightest. I trust its inclusion was an oversight, rather than an intentional effort to exclude home-educated students from federal employment.

Thank you for your timely attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Mark Meadows  
Member of Congress