



STATE OF NEW YORK
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NEW YORK, NY 10005

LETITIA JAMES
ATTORNEY GENERAL

(212) 416-8050

June 7, 2023

Brian Cornell
Chair & Chief Executive Officer
Target Corporation
1000 Nicollet Mall, TPS-1101
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Dear Mr. Cornell:

We are writing to urge you to reverse your recent decision to remove products celebrating Pride Month from the shelves of certain Target stores. While we respect your stated desire to protect staff members' "sense of safety and well-being while at work," we encourage you to consider other measures, such as enhancing security, rather than capitulating to a small group of extreme individuals' intimidation tactics. New York has a proud tradition of fighting for everyone's right to express their gender identity and sexual orientation without fear of discrimination or harassment. For more than a decade, Target has been a vocal ally in that work. As we mark the beginning of Pride Month, we urge you to put Pride-related merchandise back on the shelves.

The hostile behavior that spurred Target's decision to remove certain Pride-related products is not occurring in a vacuum. It comes on the heels of a record-breaking number of anti-LGBTQ+ bills that have been introduced in state legislatures across the country. It also comes at a time when hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation are increasing. Most relevant to Target, it has been fueled by commentators who have spread misleading information about Target's Pride products and business practices to discourage your company and other businesses from engaging in Pride-related marketing campaigns. Though the impacts of these and other far-reaching actions differ greatly, the connective tissue between them is clear – they are all manifestations of rising anti- LGBTQ+ backlash that seeks to erase LGBTQ+ identities and suppress hard-won freedoms.

Efforts to bully corporations into eschewing Pride-related business practices have real consequences. Despite progress, LGBTQ+ individuals remain highly vulnerable in our society.

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For example, a recent survey by the Trevor Project found that 41% of LGBTQ+ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, while nearly one in five transgender and non-binary young people attempted suicide. Efforts to suppress Pride-related products send a message to LGBTQ+ people that they do not belong unless they constrain their identity to fit within the proverbial closet. Moreover, when fringe beliefs and anti-social behavior are used to strong-arm one of the nation's largest general-merchandise retailers, it dissuades the broader business community from standing in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community. It also suggests that Target and other companies can be pressured into retreating from efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Target has long championed these values and it is distressing to see your company appear to be cowed into taking a step away from them.

Ultimately, we recognize Target's right to make its own business decisions and we sympathize with your attempts to protect your employees from harassment and threatening behavior. However, this is a moment that calls for courage. If we are to counter the anti-LGBTQ+ backlash that is rising across the nation, then we will need all allies – including those in the business community – to take a bold stand by refusing to be intimidated by extremist attacks and harassment. Therefore, we urge Target to demonstrate your long-standing commitment to investing in and standing with the LGBTQ+ community by putting all of your Pride-related merchandise back on the shelves, while taking strong measures to ensure employee safety.

Sincerely,



Letitia James
Attorney General



Senator Brad Holyman-Sigal



Assemblymember Tony Simone



Buffalo Councilmember Mitch Nowakowski



Syracuse Common Council Jimmy Monto



Councilmember Erik Bottcher



Assemblymember Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas



Councilmember Tiffany Caban



Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick



Councilmember Crystal Hudson

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. BT".

Senator Jabari Brisport

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chi Osse".

Councilmember Chi Osse

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel O'Donnell".

Assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Harry B. Bronson".

Assemblymember Harry B. Bronson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn Schulman".

Councilmember Lynn Schulman