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NEWS

Cincinnati Pride has fewest corporate sponsors in 3 years, several big local names remain



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Key Points

- Amid the DEI backlash, Cincinnati Pride has 54 sponsors this year, fewer than last year's 68.
- Many of Cincinnati's largest companies continued to sponsor Pride this year, with some notable exceptions.

Following a national backlash against diversity, equity and inclusion, the number of companies and organizations sponsoring Cincinnati Pride this year has dipped to a three-year low.

The annual [Cincinnati Pride celebration](#) happening this weekend has [54 sponsors](#), fewer than [last year's 68](#) and [the previous year's 65](#), according to internet archives of the organization's website.

The Enquirer determined the number of sponsors by counting the sponsor logos [on Cincinnati Pride's website](#) as of July 24, though the number of logos appearing has changed at least once over the previous week.

Companies weren't all forthcoming about their reasons for dropping Pride this year. Some said they had nothing to do with a diversity, equity and inclusion backlash, while others did not respond to requests for comment. However, after the Trump Administration's anti-DEI ban on federal contractors and grant recipients, companies [discontinued their recruiting programs for underrepresented groups](#) and

canceled longtime sponsorships of LGBTQ events across the country. And Pride festivals took a hit.

In response, Cincinnati Pride organizers announced in March that they would not accept donations from companies that "work against" the mission of Pride by dropping their support for marginalized communities.

Still, the 2025 sponsorship list reveals that many of Cincinnati Pride's biggest backers in the past continued to donate. Companies headquartered in Cincinnati including Procter & Gamble, Altafiber, Fifth Third and Kroger have donated since at least 2023 and through this year, along with Hard Rock Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Reds.

As the sole presenting sponsor, Delta Air Lines shelled out \$25,000, the most money of any sponsor, in exchange for marketing rights, radio advertisements, VIP passes and other perks, followed by P&G, which gave \$20,000 as a diamond sponsor.

Partnerships with TriHealth and Christ Hospital, both of which were Pride sponsors last year, continued.

Cincinnati Pride did not respond to emails from The Enquirer asking for the breakdown of corporate dollars versus individual donations this year.

Cincinnati Children's, Pure Romance no longer officially sponsor Pride

Previous sponsors missing from this year's list included adult sex toy brand Pure Romance, which gave at least \$13,000 the past two years and Cincinnati Children's Hospital, which had contributed \$6,500 last year and the year before.

Cincinnati Children's, which received a \$2 million donation from Pure Romance for transgender children's care in 2018, has been at the forefront of gender-affirming care for transgender children and young adults and a strong advocate for the LGBTQ community. It has been required to stop initiating hormone treatment,

puberty blockers and any surgical care because of an Ohio law that went into effect last year.

Cincinnati Children's declined to provide a reason for why it wasn't officially sponsoring Cincinnati Pride this year.

"Cincinnati Children's continues to proudly support Cincinnati PRIDE in a number of ways," said Jennifer Tan, a spokesperson for the hospital in an email. She said more than 1,000 employees would be participating in the weekend festivities.

Suzanne Murray, the spokesperson for Pure Romance, said that the company has "significantly downsized operations" and that the "unprecedented tariff increases" of up to 145% on key products have restricted its operating budget.

"These economic realities have limited our ability to make additional community sponsorships at this time," said Murray. "Our decision not to sponsor Cincinnati Pride this year is in no way reflective of our values or commitment to these important causes."

21c Museum Hotels, another 2024 Pride sponsor, responded that it wasn't officially sponsoring Cincinnati Pride this year due to "an intentional shift toward deeper, year-round impact by expanding our support for LGBTQIA+ organizations both locally and nationally."

"Our support for the LGBTQIA+ community has only grown," said Shelley Meszoly, general manager of the 21c Museum Hotel Cincinnati, pointing to its [Drag Brunch series](#) and incentives like the 21c Celebrates Pride room package, which have partial proceeds going to Cincinnati Pride and other LGBTQ nonprofits.

The Enquirer also reached out to Toyota, a 2023 and 2024 sponsor of Cincinnati Pride, and did not receive a response. In October, Toyota announced in an internal memo to employees that it would [end its DEI programs and sponsorship of LGBTQ events](#).

After cutting ties with companies, organizers succeed with crowdfunding

Corporate sponsorships helped Cincinnati Pride, a volunteer-run nonprofit, cover the costs of staging a free parade and festival that's attended by hundreds of thousands of people, according to Benjamin Morano, the president of Cincinnati Pride's board of directors, in an emailed response to The Enquirer in March.

The costs include street closures, park rentals and trash collection as well as maintaining restrooms and emergency services, said Morano, who [described](#) corporate sponsors as "the overwhelming financial supporters" of Cincinnati Pride.

To make up for an anticipated shortfall in corporate dollars this year, Cincinnati Pride [launched](#) a crowdfunding campaign and [celebrated](#) meeting its goal of receiving \$50,000 in individual donations in early June.

"The purpose of Cincinnati Pride is to provide the Greater Cincinnati LGBTQIA+ community and our allies a forum that promotes inclusion and acceptance while affirming individuality," read the statement on the fundraiser.

Allyship or pinkwashing?

Michael Chanak, a former P&G lab technician of 20 years, understands concerns that companies flip-flop on values depending on the political climate.

"There is such a thing as pinkwashing," said Chanak, who advocated for P&G to include LGBTQ employees in its equal employment policy in the 80s.

Come June, he said, there are companies that "get the advertising and disappear."

It was because of Chanak's advocacy in the 80s that P&G included sexual orientation in their equal employment opportunity policy in 1992.

Chanak said he was able to make an argument for the change because the company was both researching and marketing one of its products, a prescription mouthwash

called Peridex, to a primarily gay audience. He didn't think it was fair for the company to market products to a gay audience without extending the same protections to its gay employees.

“They had a definitive business interest,” said Chanak, “because they were marketing a product that was used by persons with AIDS to control yeast infections in their mouth before there were other effective remedies.”

Years later, due to the advocacy of a group of gay and lesbian employees, P&G extended the domestic partner benefits afforded to straight couples to same-sex couples in 2001, despite Article 12, a charter amendment passed by Cincinnati voters that [prevented the city from providing legal protections to gay and lesbian people](#) at the time.

That's why Chanak is confident that P&G's support for the LGBTQ+ community will outlast the current political turmoil.

“When they've been at this for 30 years,” he said, “I don't call that pinkwashing.”