

Seattle Pride cuts Amazon as a sponsor

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Seattle Pride has cut Amazon as a sponsor for its annual parade, citing financial support for legislation, lawmakers and organizations that do not support the LGBTQ community.

Amazon has been a sponsor for the event in the past, Seattle Pride Executive Director Krystal Marx said, following the announcement

Tuesday. But this time the company came in with a \$100,000 offer, significantly higher than past donations, and strings attached—including a request to call the annual celebration Seattle Pride Parade Presented by Amazon.

It felt as if Amazon was trying to buy the event and the nonprofit itself, Marx said.

"It was important for us to really take a hard look at how do these values align with us," she said. "This Pride Parade is for our community to celebrate, to remember Stonewall in 1969, to continue the fight for our rights, and we don't feel it was possible to accept this money."

Ahead of this year's parade scheduled for June, Seattle Pride is requiring all corporate partners to participate in a diversity, equity and inclusion survey and evaluation process. That process is part of a larger movement around the country to prevent corporations from making what Seattle Pride described as "token gestures," rather than actively supporting members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Amazon is the only corporate partner Seattle Pride has cut ties with following a deeper look into what lawmakers and organizations the company has supported, Marx said. The group has nine confirmed sponsors and is in conversation with 18 others.

Amazon says it "has long supported Seattle Pride because we believe that the rights of LGBTQ+ people must be protected," according to a spokesperson for the company.

When evaluating corporate sponsors, Marx says the group started from the top, with the companies that offered the largest donations and stood to benefit the most from exposure and involvement with the parade.

Amazon has been a sponsor for the parade on and off since 2009. It has donated roughly \$42,000 since then, Marx said.

Its list of conditions for the 2022 contribution included featuring Amazon's logo prominently along the parade route, ensuring that logo would be first and larger than other corporate partners on promotional materials and allowing an Amazon leader to make remarks at the parade. Marx said the parade typically doesn't include speeches from corporate partners.

"There is a high likelihood it came from a place of wanting to support who we are," Marx said. "It was the additional requirements that came with that, that really threw us for a loop. They wanted so much visibility at such a high level."

Seattle Pride is also accusing Amazon of donating to politicians who support anti-transgender legislation, including two bills introduced in Washington, and supporting lawmakers who voted against the federal Equality Act, legislation that was meant to expand protections against discrimination based on [sexual orientation](#) or gender identity.

Amazon is a member of The Business Coalition for the Equality Act, a group of more than 500 businesses who have voiced support for the bill.

"Amazon engages with policymakers and regulators on a wide range of issues that affect our business, customers, and employees," a spokesperson for the company said. "That does not mean we agree with any individual or political organization 100 percent of the time on every issue, and this includes legislation that discriminates or encourages discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community."

Outside of its own donations, Seattle Pride accused Amazon of facilitating donations from its customers to anti-LGBTQ groups on its

AmazonSmile platform, a program that lets online shoppers donate 0.5% of their Amazon purchase to a charity of their choice.

Amazon says nonprofits participating in the program cannot support or promote discrimination based on sex or sexual orientation, but Seattle Pride pointed to groups on the platform like Arkansas-based Family Council, which worked to pass a state constitutional amendment to define marriage "as the union of one man and one woman."

"We simply cannot partner with any organization actively harming our community through the support of discriminatory laws and politics," Seattle Pride said in its Tuesday statement.

A spokesperson for Amazon said the fact that an organization has chosen to participate in the AmazonSmile program does not mean the company endorses its views.

Seattle Pride is asking Amazon to remove organizations from the AmazonSmile program that have an anti-LGBTQ [agenda](#) and deny future requests from similar groups. It's also asking the company to request the return of political donations to candidates introducing or supporting anti-LGBTQ [legislation](#).

Making the decision to cut Amazon as a sponsor wasn't an easy one, Marx said, and it will affect the nonprofit's finances.

Amazon's donation would have helped Seattle Pride reach its proposed budget, meaning job security for the organization's four employees, investment in more accessibility resources and a guarantee that the parade and other events would be free.

Still, Marx said the day following the announcement was one of the "most encouraging days" from her time running the nonprofit. "People

have been cheering left and right," she said.

On Tuesday, Marx added, Seattle Pride received an anonymous donation with a note that read, "Amazon employee who is very proud of Seattle Pride for their announcement today."

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