



The Hershey Company (Hershey's)

Subsidiaries: Kit Kat
Locations: Pennsylvania (HQ)
Industries: Food Beverage and Tobacco

RISK LEVEL:



High Risk

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DESCRIPTION:

The Hershey Company (Hershey's) is High Risk. The company yields to political activism in shaping corporate governance, potentially alienating consumers, dividing employees, and harming shareholders. The company implements race and identity-based policies that replace merit, excellence, and integrity with preferential treatment and outcomes. Hershey's embraces corporate initiatives that redirect its central focus from business goals to partisan policies and divisive issues. This approach fails to safeguard free exercise, free speech, and free enterprise.

Corporate Weaponization

Has canceled customers, suppliers, or vendors due to their political views or religious beliefs OR High Risk corporately boycotts, divests, or sanctions regions, people groups, or industries.

In February 2022, the Hershey Company allegedly fired employees that were unvaccinated against COVID-19 (1). The company was a member of the Global Alliance for Responsible Media, which demonetized and suppressed content that it deemed to spread "hate speech" or "misinformation", discuss "debated social issues in a negative or partisan context", or "vilify" individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These arbitrary guidelines were used to censor mainstream perspectives online (2)(3)(4). Hershey received a score of 100 on the 2025 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a political stakeholder group. The company recruits employees based on sexual identity issues. The company discriminates against vendors that do not promote divisive sex and gender policies, indicating it prioritizes sexual issues over merit (5)(6).

Charitable giving (including employee matching programs) policies or practices discriminate High Risk against charitable organizations based on views or religious beliefs.

Hershey's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company will not donate to non-religious charities unless they embrace controversial sexual identity policies (1)(2). The company will not make grants to "Churches or religious organizations, including seminaries, Bible colleges and theological institutions" (3).

Employment policies fail to protect against viewpoint or other discrimination and/or are High Risk ideological in nature.

Hershey's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company forces employees to attend multiple, controversial trainings on gender identity, sexual orientation, transgender issues, and divisive racial ideology. The company provides gender transition guidelines for its employees and a specific benefits guide with a comprehensive explanation of transgender services funded by the company (1)(2).

The company requires all employees to take unconscious bias trainings two times per year (3). In March 2023 America First Legal filed a letter with the EEOC requesting a civil rights investigation into Hershey's over discriminatory practices in hiring (4)(5). The company does not provide viewpoint protections for its employees (6).

Corporate Governance and Public Policy

Uses corporate reputation to support causes, organizations, or policies hostile to freedom of expression. High Risk

Hershey's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company agrees to allow a controversial stakeholder group focused on sexual identity issues to dictate marketing or advertising strategy. By doing so, the company risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). Hershey's signed an open letter endorsing the Equality Act, a contentious proposal to amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act by adding sexual orientation and so-called gender identity as protected categories. The legislation would, among other implications, grant biological men access to women-only spaces such as sports teams and public restrooms, and compel healthcare providers to deliver sex-denying healthcare (3). On International Women's Day, the company featured a trans woman in its promotion, drawing criticism (4). Hershey's CEO, Michele Buck, signed the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion pledge, which includes a commitment to promote DEI through bias education training in the workplace, strategize on DEI programs/initiatives with other signatories, and engage boards of directors when developing and evaluating DEI strategies (5)(6). The company is a Ceres Network Member, committed to carbon neutrality by 2040 (7)(8)(9).

Uses corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies hostile to freedom of expression. High Risk

Hershey's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company covers transgender related costs for its employees and their children, including paid short-term leave, puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, chest surgeries, genital surgeries, medical visits and lab monitoring, travel and lodging. Additionally, the company has pledged philanthropic support of at least one organization or event that promotes sex and gender ideology. By allowing a political stakeholder group to dictate operations, the company increases health care costs and risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). The Hershey Company was a member of the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (3)(4)(5). The company has also pledged \$250,000 to the Black Lives Matter movement and related causes (6)(7). Hershey's is a corporate partner of the NGLCC and a Bronze sponsor of the HRC (8)(9). Otherwise, there are no publicly known cases of the company using corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies (10).

Uses corporate political actions and/or financial contributions for ideological, non-business purposes. High Risk

Hershey's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company publicly advocated for controversial sex and gender ideology through local, state or federal legislation or initiatives. By allowing a political stakeholder group to dictate operations, the company risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). Hershey's has not used its PAC donations or lobbying for ideological purposes (3)(4)(5).

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