



CVS Health

Locations: Rhode Island (HQ)

Industries: Food and Staples Retailing, Health Care Equipment and Services

RISK LEVEL:



High Risk

DESCRIPTION:

CVS Health (CVS) 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. CVS 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 corporately boycotts, divests, or sanctions regions, people groups, or industries. High Risk

CVS fired a Catholic nurse practitioner after she refused to prescribe or administer abortifacients, citing her religious beliefs (1). The nurse had worked with CVS for multiple years without qualms until CVS changed its religious exemption rules in 2022 and tried to force the nurse to prescribe life-ending drugs that go against her religious beliefs (2). The former employee is suing CVS for religious discrimination in an ongoing lawsuit. A similar lawsuit was filed in 2023 (3). CVS was a member of the Global Alliance for Responsible Media, which aims to demonetize advertisements and suppress content that "vilifies" individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity, discusses "debated social issues in a negative or partisan context" or spreads "hate speech" (4)(5)(6). CVS will dispense the abortion drug mifepristone at some of its pharmacies (7)(8). At one CVS location, the pharmacists distributed abortion drugs instead of fertility drugs to a young woman who was trying to get pregnant (9). CVS Health 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 (10)(11). The company promotes divisive sex and gender policies. Its Supplier Code of Conduct requires international vendors to include sexual orientation and gender identity in their nondiscrimination policy (12). CVS Health integrates ESG into its business practices. From its CVS Health Supplier Ethical Standards 2023: "Our Responsible Sourcing Standard establishes our requirements for suppliers and lays the foundation for our Responsible Sourcing Program" (13). From its Responsible Sourcing Standard page: Suppliers must "[s]eek ways to reduce environmental impacts of their operations, including waste, water, greenhouse gas emissions, and raw materials sourcing" (14).

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

CVS Health's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company will not donate to non-religious charities unless they embrace controversial sexual identity policies (1)(2). Donations stay within the health sector, benefitting a wide range of charities across the US. They encourage matching grants for volunteer hours rather than employee donations and do not discriminate against religious groups (3)(4).

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

High Risk

CVS Health'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 appears to prioritize diversity over merit in its leadership composition. From its Guidelines page: "In each search undertaken to identify director candidates, the Nominating and Governance Committee shall include individuals who reflect diverse backgrounds and experiences that align with the Company's then current workforce strategies that support our strategic objectives" (3). CVS appears to prioritize diversity over merit in its supplier diversity. From its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion page: "Diverse suppliers play a critical role in helping us achieve that goal and ensuring our company's continued success" (4). The company appears to prioritize diversity over merit in its hiring and promotion. From its 2021 Diversity Highlights: "[The company's diversity] efforts resulted in more than 200 percent increase in the hiring and promotion of Black and Hispanic colleagues to executive positions" (5). CVS requires unconscious bias and allyship training for its leadership, which includes multiple personal pledges to DEI and advocacy (6). The company protects its employees against viewpoint discrimination (7).

Corporate Governance and Public Policy

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

High Risk

CVS Health'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). The company opposed various state and local legislation intended to protect parental rights, girls' sports, bathroom facilities, and gendered spaces (3). CVS Health opposed legislation in Iowa intended to protect parental rights, girls' sports, bathroom facilities, and gendered spaces (4). CVS Health 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 (5). The company opposed the Florida Parental Rights in Education Act, which would prohibit teaching gender identity and sexual orientation to kids in K-3rd grade (6). CVS' CEO Karen Lynch is a member of the Business Roundtable and Former CEO Larry Merlo signed its 2019 Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation, which promotes stakeholder capitalism over traditional obligations to shareholders (7)(8). The company is a Ceres Network Member, committed to carbon neutrality by 2040 (9)(10)(11). The company's former CEO Larry J. Merlo 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 (12)(13). CVS Health ties its leadership compensation to diversity progress in hiring and recruiting (14). The company's 2021 Diversity Highlights reported, under the Diverse Representation header, that it "dropped the minimum [college] grade point average" to accommodate for more diverse recruiting (15). CVS Health supports DEI within its business practices. From its Healthy Business page: "We have a longstanding and unwavering commitment to... Championing an inclusive workplace where every colleague feels valued, supported and inspired with a sense of belonging" (16). Whistleblowers allege that CVS has mandatory "antiracism" training programs featuring core tenets of critical race theory (17)(18)(19). In the wake of backlash against DEI, CVS Health stopped mentioning diversity pay metric information in its annual 10-K filing. The company said senior managers are still incentivized to create and maintain inclusive culture (20). CVS published a "Gender Transition" guide for employees to follow, including using the bathroom, pronouns, and name of their choice, even offering time off for procedures, while encouraging other employees not to make assumptions about gender (21). The company is committed to net zero emissions by 2050 (22).

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

CVS Health provides a benefits package for employees that covers travel/lodging costs for an abortion and transgender medical procedures for covered employees and dependents, including children (1)(2). The company'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 (3)(4). CVS Health stated, "We will continue to provide colleagues, clients, and consumers with the flexibility to choose medical and pharmacy benefits to best suit their needs. This includes, subject to plan terms and customer direction for self-funded plans, making out of state abortion healthcare services more accessible and affordable" (5). The company continues to support abortion through its abortion-inducing drugs that it sells for profit (6). CVS Health was a member of the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (7)(8)(9). The company is a Platinum sponsor of the HRC (10). CVS Health is a partner of the HRC's Foundation (11). The company committed \$600 million to the Black Lives Matter movement and related causes; some of the funds went to non-ideological causes such as career development and education, though part of the sum went to "social justice organizations," which the statement does not specify (12)(13)(14)(15). CVS is a copper sponsor of Out & Equal and a corporate partner of the NGLCC (16)(17). In 2022, the company approved for future use \$25,000 to YWCA Hartford (18). In 2023, the company donated \$25,000 to YWCA Hartford (19). Otherwise, there are no publicly known cases of CVS using corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies (20).

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

CVS Health'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). In 2024, 2022, 2020, 2018 the company donated to the Equality PAC but has not lobbied for ideological purposes (3)(4)(5).

The contents of this website and related resources (collectively, the "materials") are general in nature and intended for educational use only. Nothing in the materials or any other 1792 Exchange content constitutes legal or professional advice for any specific matter. Anyone seeking legal or professional advice should obtain such advice from competent counsel. Since individual circumstances vary, anyone reviewing the materials and/or any other 1792 Exchange content is strongly urged to obtain specific legal and/or other professional advice before acting or refraining from acting based on such materials or other 1792 Exchange content. 1792 Exchange accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage, howsoever incurred, which may result from accessing or relying on the materials or any other 1792 Exchange content. Further, 1792 Exchange disclaims, to the fullest extent permitted by law, all liability for any acts or omissions based on the materials or any other 1792 Exchange content.

USER AGREEMENT: Company reports and other resources are intended only for the private educational use of the registered user. Republishing and distributing reports and resources is strictly prohibited. By downloading reports and resources, the user accepts these conditions.

© 1792 Exchange 2023