

In the wake of an ongoing customer backlash against Target, the retail chain's longtime partnership with a national activist group that places LGBT-themed books in K-12 school libraries and encourages teachers to discuss sex and gender with children has gained renewed attention.

Over the past decade, the New York City-based Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has received from Target more than \$2 million in donations, according to the company's website.

"Target donated \$250,000 donation to GLSEN to advance its mission of creating affirming, accessible and antiracist spaces for LGBTQIA+ students," the retail giant [said](#) last year in a blog post celebrating Pride Month. "This marks our 11th year of partnership, with a total of \$2.1 million in support to date."

Founded in 1990 by a teacher-turned-gay activist who would later [oversee](#) the Obama administration's school drug and violence prevention program, GLSEN bills itself as a "leading national organization working to guarantee LGBTQ+ students safe and affirming education," with 43 chapters in 30 states across the nation.

In 2015, GLSEN worked with Target to produce a mini-documentary for the group's [25th-anniversary](#) celebration. "Together, we have been able to change school climates for LGBT youth and are excited about what the next 25 years will bring," then-GLSEN executive director Eliza Byard said at the time.

While outrage over Target's effort to market LGBT-themed children's products continues to grow, GLSEN's effort to send "LGBT-affirming text" to schools has been going on without drawing much public attention.

In a video call recording shared to social media last year, senior education programs manager Michael Rady [states](#) that GLSEN's

"Rainbow Library" initiative puts "a major emphasis on books centered on the voices of trans and non-binary people as well as books that tend to the voices of BIPOC LGBTQ+ people."

"I know as a former teacher that having high-quality LGBTQ books at my fingertips will allow me to seamlessly integrate this into a reading lesson that I otherwise would be teaching anyway," Rady said. "It's the first step for getting in front of kids."

Among [the list](#) of books GLSEN wants to see elementary school students reading are "When Aidan Became a Brother" and "I Am Jazz." The former is described as a story about how a couple "fixed the parts of life that didn't fit anymore" after their daughter told them she "felt more like a boy." The latter tells the story of a boy who felt he "had a girl's brain in a boy's body" just because he loved stereotypical girly things like "pink and dressing up as a mermaid."

According to [its website](#), the Rainbow Library program has sent 46,000 "LGBTQ+ affirming K-12 books" to over 4,600 schools across the country. "Each set contains 10 LGBTQ+ affirming grade-aligned books, as well as posters and supplemental

resources,” it says. Having an LGBT library “can allow a district or a state to have that first stepping stone to inclusive curriculum,” according to Rady.

When it comes to curriculum, GLSEN has been encouraging K-12 teachers to incorporate sex and gender discussions into the teachings, including when teaching mathematics.

“An example from Algebra II could be a linear programming problem constructed with the goal of finding the cheapest possible way to attend prom. The problem could include the cost of tickets per person, tuxedo rental, dresses, dinner, and a limo ride, and be explicit about including LGBTQ couples in any formal attire they choose,” a “trans educator” at the group suggested in a blog post about “trans-inclusive” math class.

“As teachers teach about data collection and relevance, they should include whether it is beneficial to include gender or biological sex, being sure to reinforce the difference between those two terms,” it read. “When students are creating their own surveys, if they want to include data for biological sex, teachers need to be sure they include both intersex and other as choices, and if the students want to include data for gender, a variety of choices need to be included, such as a gender, genderfluid, female, male, nonbinary, transman, transwoman, and other.”

GLSEN also recommends that, for the sake of students; “safety and well-being at home,” teachers keep parents in the dark if their child identifies as a different gender at school and doesn’t want them to know. “Staff or educators shall not disclose any information that may reveal a student’s gender identity to others, including parents or guardians and other staff, unless the student has authorized such disclosure, the information is contained in school records requested by a parent or guardian, or there is another compelling need,” one of GLSEN’s [model school guidelines](#) read.

On Friday, GLSEN put out a statement in support of Target, praising the company’s commitment to the cause and claiming that “extremist groups” are organizing “coordinated anti-LGBTQ+ attacks.”

“We’ve seen this extremist playbook of attacks before. Their goal is clear: to prevent LGBTQ+ inclusion and representation, silence our allies and make our community invisible,” the group said. It didn’t name any specific group supposedly organizing the said attacks.

Amid an outrage similar to the one faced not too long ago by Bud Light beers because of its **disastrous marketing campaign**

featuring transgender TikTok personality Dylan Mulvaney, Target responded by removing some of the LGBT merchandise, citing safety concerns for employees who allegedly had been threatened.

“Since introducing this year’s collection, we’ve experienced threats impacting our team members’ sense of safety and well-being while at work,” the company said last week in a statement to media outlets. “Given these volatile circumstances, we are making adjustments to our plans, including removing items that have been at the center of the most significant confrontational behavior.”

“Our focus now is on moving forward with our continuing commitment to the LGBTQIA+ community and standing with them as we celebrate Pride Month and throughout the year.”