

The Blue and Yellow Stepchild

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Published September 20, 2007 | Updated March 31, 2026

https://www.transadvocate.com/the-blue-and-yellow-stepchild_n_183.htm

Abstract

Every year around this time I start seeing the GLBT media get in a feeding frenzy about the HRC's Corporate Equality Index (CEI). Story after story is told of how American corporations are getting better and better for GLBT Americans. That may be true for GLB Americans, but the transgender part of the index is [...]

Article

Every year around this time I start seeing the GLBT media get in a feeding frenzy about the HRC's Corporate Equality Index (CEI). Story after story is told of how American corporations are getting better and better for GLBT Americans.

That may be true for GLB Americans, but the transgender part of the index is fatally flawed. The transgender wellness benefits defined in the 2c component include:

1. *counseling by a mental health professional*
2. *pharmacy benefits covering hormone therapy*
3. *medical visits to monitor the effects of hormone therapy and other associated lab procedures.*
4. *medically necessary surgical procedures such as hysterectomy or short-term disability leave for surgical procedures*

A company only needs to give ONE of these benefits to get the five points. What does that mean in a practical way? Nick Gorton MD explains it this way:

"Let's say you are Dominos Pizza and you get the HRC CEI index survey to fill out. One question asks you if you provide "medically necessary surgical procedures (i.e. hysterectomy)". Then it asks you if you exclude transgender employees from this benefit. If you state that you don't exclude transgender employees then you get 5 points on item (#4) 2.c on the CEI. So let's say your policy is that if a transgender man has invasive cervical cancer that your insurance will actually (shock and horror!) pay for his hysterectomy rather than condemning him to death for an untreated cancer. Well then heeeeeeey! All of a sudden you are hella transgender friendly, Dominos. (And yes, Dominos got that.... Christian-Fundamentalist funding Dominos offers transgender benefits.)"

Companies like Microsoft, General Motors, IBM, and Eastman Kodak will get the same grade as Dominos, even though they comprehensively cover (they cover parts a, b, and c, including sex reassignment surgery).

edit thanks to eastside kate

Since last year HRC has modified the question to:

Do insurance plans available to your general work force cover the following treatments and, if so, is there at least one company-sponsored insurance plan that does not exclude coverage for medically-necessary treatment related to gender dysphoria or gender reassignment?

While that is a slight improvement, if the company only gives time off for the employee for surgery, they still get the full five points. Companies like Microsoft, General Motors, IBM, and Eastman Kodak will get the same grade as Dominos, even though they comprehensively cover (they cover parts a, b, and c, including sex reassignment surgery).

Why won't HRC change this policy? Most likely, it's because they don't want to see lower scores for corporations that received a 100 percent rating. It also could be that with that new criteria HRC, NGLTF, and other national GLBT organizations wouldn't get a 100% in their own index! The excuse used to be that it was too expensive to cover transgender surgery, but the city of San Francisco has proven proven that to be false. If they are going to use that excuse, I wish they'd explain how that's any different than the cost of domestic partner benefits?

[Figure] hrcstepchild.gif

Whatever the reason, it's time that the CEI is revamped. If you're going to include us in

your mission statement, then include us in your activism and advocacy (and your own insurance policies). The Human Rights Campaign (and any other organization GLBT organization that includes us in their mission statement) needs to stop treating us like their stepchild.

Suggested citation

Marti Abernathey. "The Blue and Yellow Stepchild." TransAdvocate, September 20, 2007.
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