# University of Mississippi withdraws support from 2025 Oxford Pride Parade amid new state DEI restrictions



The University of Mississippi (UM) has announced it will withdraw all institutional support and involvement from the 2025 Oxford Pride Parade, citing the need to comply with the recently enacted Mississippi House Bill 1193, which imposes restrictions on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in public educational institutions. This decision impacts the university’s historic role in supporting the parade, which is scheduled for this Saturday at 2 p.m. and is part of the broader Oxford Pride celebrations under the theme “Defying Gravity.”

The parade will still proceed as planned, commencing and concluding at the Oxford-University Depot, with the Justice for Jay Lee organisation designated as the honorary grand marshal. However, the university will no longer provide resources such as golf carts for individuals with mobility challenges, nor will its departments, schools, divisions, colleges, or centres officially participate in or promote the event. Jacob Batte, UM's director of news and media relations, stated, “The 2025 Oxford Pride Parade will continue with support from many community partners. This year, the university has paused its institutional support as leadership evaluates the impact of new state legislation on university involvement in events and activities. The university remains committed to fostering a welcoming environment for all while ensuring compliance with state law.”

House Bill 1193, signed into law by Governor Tate Reeves on April 17, restricts public K-12 and postsecondary schools in Mississippi from adopting DEI statements and practices, including prohibiting the promotion of “transgender ideology,” the use of pronouns, and other DEI programs within these institutions.

The Oxford Pride Parade was initially established in 2016 by the UM Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies, aiming to create an inclusive event during the academic year for LGBTQIA+ students, faculty, staff, and allies to feel welcomed and integrated within the Lafayette-Oxford-University (LOU) community. The event also seeks to promote understanding and education about the university's and city’s queer communities.

Oxford Pride addressed the university’s withdrawal on its Instagram page, explaining that UM is consulting with the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), the governing board for Mississippi’s eight public universities, to clarify how HB 1193 will affect higher education institutions statewide. The post noted, “While all Pride events will take place as scheduled, university leadership has directed the Sarah Isom Center and other university entities to step back from their institutional involvement with the 2025 Oxford Pride Parade while they study the new HB 1193 law and await guidance from IHL on how we can continue to support everyone on our campus.” The Sarah Isom Center also shared this message via its social media.

In response to the loss of university funding and logistical support, Oxford Pride launched a GoFundMe campaign aiming to raise $5,000 to cover general expenses, which quickly surpassed its target by Wednesday, 30 April. Kevin Cozart, Program Coordinator at the Sarah Isom Center, explained that prior federally-sponsored fiscal support was withdrawn after the university’s decision.

Two student organisations, UMPride Network and OUTGrads, have stepped up as the official sponsors of Oxford Pride in the absence of institutional backing. Brooke Skolsky, junior psychology major and president of UMPride Network, remarked, “We were already deeply invested in Pride Week as a whole, so the decision to take over the parade was a no-brainer. We wanted to get the parade out there in any way we can, as it is such an important thing for queer students at the university.” Skolsky expressed surprise at the university’s swift reaction to the bill, criticising the institution’s stance as unsupportive of queer students.

Similarly, Paul Mora, graduate student and representative for OUTGrads, described feelings of anger and frustration. Drawing from his military background, he compared the university’s compliance with HB 1193 to policies limiting inclusivity in the armed forces. “The military has shown us that inclusive policies or practices have not impacted readiness at the unit level in any war,” Mora said. “What are you supposed to think when your university is co-signing to policies that make life more complicated for different communities at the place you decided to call home for two years, four years or longer?” He urged the university administration, including Chancellor Boyce, to engage more directly with the LGBTQ+ community and allies, emphasising the importance of understanding the significance of pride events.

Phillip “Pip” Gordon, UM alumnus, adviser to the UM Pride Network, and visiting assistant professor of gender studies, encouraged LGBTQ+ student organisations to unite and mobilise a “student section” to march together at the parade. Gordon highlighted that the university hosts multiple student groups representing its diverse and vibrant student body, including several dedicated to queer students and allies. He noted that these organisations cultivate a strong sense of inclusion and said, “For this weekend’s parade, we wanted to create a space for students from all these organisations — and from across our university — to support each other by marching in solidarity for the values that make our university a great public institution.”

The university’s decision to withdraw formal support from the Oxford Pride Parade marks a significant change in the relationship between the institution and the event which has been a fixture of the community for nearly a decade. The actions stem directly from compliance with state legislation governing DEI policies in Mississippi’s public educational system, creating a complex dynamic affecting students, staff, and community participants ahead of Saturday’s event.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.noahwire.com> - The source of the original article detailing the University of Mississippi's withdrawal from the 2025 Oxford Pride Parade due to compliance with Mississippi House Bill 1193.
2. <https://legiscan.com/MS/text/HB1193/id/3121157> - The official text of Mississippi House Bill 1193, which prohibits public schools and postsecondary educational institutions from creating, promoting, and implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs.
3. <https://www.apnews.com/article/4d80ec7e9d372e74b129efc402ac0b76> - An Associated Press article discussing the trend of Republican lawmakers proposing bills to defund or ban DEI initiatives in public institutions, including Mississippi's HB 1193.
4. <https://www.noahwire.com/oxford-pride-parade-2025-update> - An update from the Oxford Pride Parade organizers addressing the University of Mississippi's withdrawal and their plans to proceed with the event.
5. <https://www.noahwire.com/oxford-pride-parade-2025-funding> - Information about the GoFundMe campaign launched by Oxford Pride to cover expenses after the university's withdrawal of support.
6. <https://www.noahwire.com/oxford-pride-parade-2025-student-organizations> - Details on how student organizations like UMPride Network and OUTGrads are stepping up as official sponsors of the Oxford Pride Parade in the absence of institutional backing.
7. <https://thedmonline.com/university-cuts-support-for-oxford-pride/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data