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# Trump's 'Big Beautiful Bill'

could give way for illegal  
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failure to comply with an injunction  
or temporary restraining order if no  
security was given when the  
injunction or order was issued"**



Music to  
celebrate the  
Pride season  
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Financial woes  
for Pride  
celebrations  
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Mission:

The focus of *QNotes* is to serve the LGBTQ and straight ally communities of the Charlotte region, North Carolina and beyond, by featuring arts, entertainment, news and views content in print and online that directly enlightens, informs and engages the readers about LGBTQ life and social justice issues.

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### Raleigh celebrates PRIDE 2025

Raleigh Pride kicked off Sunday, June 1. If you're planning on visiting North Carolina's capital city over the course of the month, you can look forward to a bevy of Pride-related activities and presentations from the LGBT Center of Raleigh and other venues in the area.

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### Examining Ballroom and House Culture

Learn about the Carolina Chapter of the Artistic Haus of Telfar as we take a look at the history of Ballroom and House culture, from its roots in the Black and Latin LGBTQ+ communities of New York to a phenomenon that has spread to the Carolinas and continues to evolve.

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### The People speak on Social Media

#### Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" would:

- Eliminate Health Insurance for 13.7 million Americans
- Take food away from 4 million children
- End Pell Grants for 1.4 million students
- Cut Medicare & Medicaid by over \$1 trillion
- Give the top 1% a \$664 billion tax break



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# North Carolina's General Assembly is moving to pass more anti-LGBTQ+ legislation

N.C. Republicans appear to be following the direction of MAGA when it comes to trans policy



by Taylor Heeden Larkins  
Qnotes Staff Writer

Last legislative session in the North Carolina General Assembly saw the passing and enacting of three anti-LGBTQ+ bills targeting queer and trans youth. The 2025-26 legislative session kicked off in January. In the months since, several proposed bills aimed at restricting LGBTQ+ healthcare and well-being have made their way through the General Assembly, adding to a slew of anti-LGBTQ+ policies being proposed across the country.

Some of these bills pose a true danger to the health and security of some of North Carolina's most vulnerable. From bills restricting the treatment of minors for sexually transmitted diseases and mental health care to eliminating all DEI from public education, Republican lawmakers have made it their mission to attack the very foundation on which North Carolina was founded.

The Preamble of North Carolina's Constitution states:

"We hold it to be self-evident that all persons are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, the enjoyment of the fruits of their own labor, and the pursuit of happiness."

Several proposed bills on the docket for the current legislative session fail to ensure all North Carolinians are protected and valued by the government sworn to serve them. Qnotes has compiled a list of proposed bills in both the state House and Senate targeting LGBTQ+ residents, which could set a precedent and framework for other states to enact discriminatory legislation.

## Senate Bill 227: Eliminating DEI in education

SB 227 aims to dismantle diversity, equity and inclusion programs and initiatives in North Carolina K-12 public schools.

According to the ACLU of North Carolina, classroom censorship efforts such as attempting to remove diversity in classrooms work to effectively erase the history and lived experiences of the historically marginalized: women, people of color and LGBTQ+ people. In addition, these policies censor discussions around race, gender and sexuality impacting people's daily lives, including North Carolina's students.

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), a human rights organization focused on advocating for LGBTQ+ students in public schools, released a report card grading North Carolina on its acceptance of LGBTQ+ youth: the Tar Heel State received a grade of D, citing increased rates of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying. According to GLSEN, North Carolina is home to 63,000 LGBTQ+ youth aged 13-17, including 4,650 transgender youth. Most queer and trans students in North Carolina experienced bullying because of their identity, including

62 percent who were verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation and 28 percent who were physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender identity.

Around 66 percent of victimized LGBTQ+ youth never reported harassment to school authorities. In addition, 62 percent experienced at least one form of anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination in schools, which disproportionately impacts transgender and non-binary students.

SB 227 passed the Senate and is now making its way through the House, according to the N.C. General Assembly bill tracker.

## Senate Bill 442: Anti-trans adoption discrimination

SB 442, which is the same bill as HB 560, would prevent abuse or neglect allegations from being based on not accepting a children's gender identity. This would put LGBTQ+ youth in North Carolina's foster system at an increased risk of abuse and neglect, as the state would no longer classify not accepting trans identities as child abuse or neglect.

Also known as the Parents Protection Act, this bill states raising a child "consistent with their biological sex" wouldn't classify as abuse. In addition, the bill would prevent abuse claims from being filed against biological parents who wish to raise their child as the sex assigned at birth, even if a child wishes to do otherwise. The bill prevents adoption agencies from disqualifying potential adoptive parents if they don't accept a child's gender identity, something Rep. Donnie Loftis (R-Gastonia) claims to help with the shortage in eligible foster home assignments for youth.

"I don't want it to be used as a pre-qualifier that says, 'Oh, you're one of those. You are not going to be getting a child because you can't accept that,'" he told *NC Health News* when they approached him on the matter.

However, foster youth advocates are criticizing this proposed policy. Gaile Osborne, executive director of the Foster Family Alliance of North Carolina and a foster parent to six children, told reporters it's not up to foster parents to determine the gender identity of a foster youth. In fact, she called it "overreach."

"They need safe and loving homes,



If passed, North Carolina's anti-LGBTQ+ legislation could have a devastating impact on our youth community.

whatever their pronouns are, and I just don't think that this is the answer to the question: 'How do we get more foster homes?'" she said.

SB 442 is currently in the Senate. At the time of this writing it has yet to be scheduled for a vote.

## House Bill 519: Restricting minors' access to healthcare

This bill would revoke the ability for minors to provide consent to certain types of health care services without parental permission. The impacted healthcare restrictions include testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy prevention such as birth control, substance use treatment and mental health services.

Under the bill, parents would have to consent for their child to receive any of these health services. The bill also grants parents the right to access all of their child's medical records.

LGBTQ+ youth, particularly gay and bisexual males and transgender youth, experience disproportionately high rates of STIs compared to their cisgender, heterosexual peers. These disparities are influenced by factors like stigma, discrimination and limited access to healthcare, which this bill would further constrict.

According to a study completed by the National Institutes of Health, the odds of substance use for LGBTQ+ youth were, on average, 190 percent higher than for heterosexual youth, making it more important for these young people to access the healthcare they need, oftentimes more than

their heterosexual peers.

This bill has passed its second reading in the House and has been referred to the Committee On Rules and Operations of the Senate, according to the General Assembly bill tracker.

## HB 606: Anti-trans civil procedure amendment

House Bill 606 modifies the statute of limitations for medical malpractice claims specifically related to gender-affirming care. Under this bill, individuals would have up to 10 years after turning 18 to file a malpractice lawsuit tied to medical treatment aimed at "facilitating or perpetuating gender transition." In contrast, the standard time frame for filing malpractice claims in other areas of healthcare is typically limited to three years from the date of the incident.

The bill also eliminates the existing cap on non-economic damages – such as pain and suffering – for malpractice cases involving gender-affirming care. By comparison, in other medical malpractice cases, non-economic damages are generally limited to a maximum of \$500,000.

In addition, HB 606 includes provisions that would ban the use of state funds or public health insurance programs to pay for gender transition surgeries or treatments involving puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones for individuals who are incarcerated in state prisons or under the custody of the Department of Adult Corrections.

This bill has passed the House and has been referred to the Committee On Rules and Operations of the Senate, according to the state bill tracker. ::



# Charlotte's PLUS Collective shares announcements amid board resignations

Grant winners and new board members confirmed despite gala cancellation



by Jonathan Golian  
Qnotes Staff Writer

Earlier this year Charlotte's PLUS Collective (TPC) announced their intentions to hold their annual flagship event "The Celebration" gala at the Foundation of the Carolinas in Uptown. As the mid-May date grew closer, the organization announced a temporary pause on the festivity with an email on May 9, just six days before the event was to take place.

While not giving specifics as to why the plug had been pulled, TPC promised a reimagining of their event in a statement released on May 23. "While we were looking forward to celebrating with you in person," the release reads, "we remain steadfast in our commitment to our mission: to support local LGBTQ+ non-profit organizations and enable them to continue their critical programming and services for our community."

In the email sent out to supporters and stakeholders, TPC put a silver lining onto the turn of events by highlighting the organizations chosen to receive grants for 2025. "Despite the changes to our event, we are thrilled to be distributing a total of \$140,000 to these deserving organizations, underscoring our unwavering commitment to the community."

The categories and recipients are:

#### Basic Operating Grants

Be More Foundation  
Charlotte Black Pride  
Charlotte Gaymers Network  
Charlotte Royals Rugby Football Club  
Charlotte Trans Health  
Gay Men's Chorus of Charlotte  
One Voice Chorus  
PFLAG Charlotte  
Time Out Youth  
Twirl to the World Foundation

#### Project, Program & Events Grants

Building Hope Building Commitment  
Hare Bandits  
RAIN  
Theatre Gap Initiative  
We Rock Charlotte  
Winter Awakening

#### Grassroots Grants

Charlotte Pride FC

Also in the email, TPC announced the names of five new board members that have joined the organization between late 2024 and early 2025. Each new addition hails from a local organization or corporation, Scott Mealus and Ebony Watts of Bank of America, Tim Gwynn of Krispy Kreme, Sam Behrend of Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina and Erin Goldstein of Charlotte Jewish Preschool.

While all of this would have been great to share in front of many of TPC's peers and supporters, the sudden cancellation of "The Celebration" has put a damper on

the announcements. The organization will soon give more information on their plan to reimagine the event. The grantees will be able to share how their funding is being of service to the community as part of the reimagining. "We are listening to our stakeholders in order to give them what they want," Kemp told *Qnotes*.

The cancellation itself has left community members scratching their heads. One primary reason may be due to low ticket sales leading into May 15, the previously scheduled date. Louis Kemp, the current Board Chair of TPC, alluded to that as a possibility in a few lead-up emails, but also pointed to a problem plaguing LGBTQ+ organizations around the country: diminishing donations. Prior to the Trump Administration regaining control of the government, LGBTQ+ non-profits experienced substantial support for queer initiatives.

"As Board Chair, I've witnessed firsthand the incredible impact our organization has in supporting the vital work of local LGBTQ+ non-profits right here in Charlotte," Kemp said in his message to supporters. "These organizations are the backbone of our community, providing critical programming and services to those who need them most."

"However, the landscape of funding is shifting dramatically. Due to evolving priorities within many corporations, both nationally and here in Charlotte, the financial support our local LGBTQ+ organizations have relied on is becoming increasingly uncertain. This means that the generosity of individual donors like you is now more crucial than ever before. Your support directly empowers these organizations to continue their life-affirming work, ensuring that our community has access to the resources and care it deserves."

One last, but certainly not minor reason for poor ticket sales could have come from a bit of controversy surrounding the TPC's BOD meeting in April.

Kemp, now the outgoing Board Chair, as also announced in the May 23 email, was not present to lead the meeting. Instead, much of the action came under the gaze of current Vice Chair Malone Lockaby, who will



The PLUS Collective at Charlotte Pride in 2024. CREDIT: Facebook

be taking on the full Board Chair role as of June 1.

During the meeting, according to sources, the incoming chair expressed descent toward a specific organization and an individual in it while discussing how they could assist grant applicants with their applications. Those who worked with *Qnotes* to understand the situation depicted the outburst as creating tensions within the group, to the point where two board members resigned; Jenny Gunn and Doug Taylor. At least one, Taylor, allegedly texted the acting chair, during the meeting, with his resignation.

The next day, following the meeting, both members were sent letters signed by Kemp, effectively removing them from their positions on TPC's board. In an effort to explain the follow-up documentation after the member's resignations, Kemp told *Qnotes* that the letters were simply a professional formality and were sent by decision of the executive committee.

Hoping to push past the problems of

the evening in April and look forward, Kemp wants the positive to outshine everything happening. "I want people to look past the dysfunction of the board and look at the fact we're adding board members and building more relationships so that we can support the critical organizations in the LGBTQ+ community in the Charlotte region," Kemp expressed to *Qnotes*.

Despite some of the funding shortfalls LGBTQ+ organizations around the United States are dealing with, Kemp remains hopeful. The support by residents in and outside Charlotte is certainly not lost on him, if his words are anything to go by.

"We deeply appreciate your ongoing support and belief in the mission of The PLUS Collective. We are excited about this new chapter and look forward to sharing more details about our re-imagined event, one which will create a more impactful and sustainable fundraising model, in the near future. In the meantime, your continued donations are crucial in helping us sustain our work and support our grant recipients." :

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## Trans woman arrested after threat to assassinate SC Rep Nancy Mace

A transgender woman from Greenville was taken into custody on May 15 for threatening to kill South Carolina Rep. Nancy Mace.

Roxie Wolfe, 19, who was arrested under their legally recognized name, Samuel Theodore Cain, made a post targeting Mace on April 26 on the Elon Musk-owned social media website X (Twitter), according to the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED).

"I'm going to assassinate representative Nancy Mace with a gun and I'm being 100 percent dead ass," the post read, before being deleted. Four days afterward, Wolfe spoke with federal agents about the message, admitting to making the threat online. As of last week, Wolfe has been booked into the Greenville County Detention Center.

Wolfe's motivation for making the post has been connected with comments made by Mace following a speech at the University of South Carolina days before. When a 20-year-old transgender student

had asked Mace to apologize for using the word "tranny," Mace asked her about the derogatory nature of the word, right before repeating it three times and posting a clip of the exchange on her social media, including on X, gaining national attention along with, allegedly, Wolfe's ire.

This incident is far from the first time that Mace has intentionally antagonized the LGBTQ+ community, and specifically transgender individuals, all for her political gain in the hateful anti-trans brand she has cultivated over time.

Whether coming up with bathroom bills barring transgender people from entering women's bathrooms at the Nation's Capital, in response to Rep. Sarah McBride (D-DE) being voted into office or speaking against civil protections for trans people as a protected class while in Iowa, Mace has made it her mission to offend as many people as possible. In the wake of her actions, despite

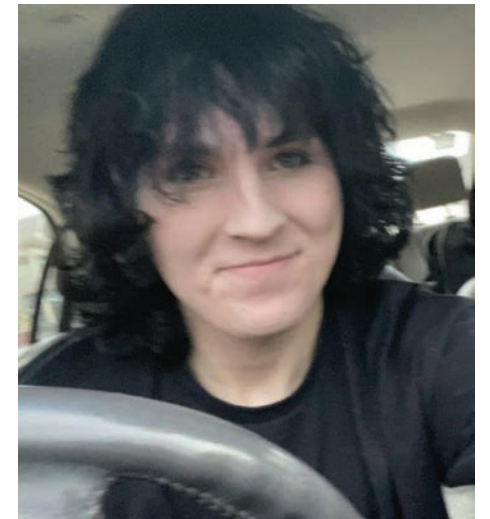
claiming that she is pro-women, many have been accosted for looking even the slightest bit out of character or masculine, as in the case of Walmart firing a 6'4" cisgender woman after being threatened by a man who thought she was trans.

While *Qnotes* does not condone violence of any kind, given her increasingly aggressive history towards the LGBTQ+ community, despite at one point being an ally, it does not come as a surprise when Mace herself admitted to getting death threats on a regular basis while speaking at Wolfe's preliminary hearing last week.

"My kids live in fear about being killed," she said. "My kids live in fear about being murdered. They live in fear about their mom being shot. And that was what was top of mind for me this morning, is that my kids live with that fear."

It is that same type fear that transgender citizens live every day due to their identities all around the United States, as well as around the world, and yet, Mace and her co-conspirators persist.

Wolfe is currently being held without bond until their next appearance before a circuit court judge. The maximum penalty



Roxie Wolfe in a selfie from Facebook. CREDIT: Facebook

for threatening a public official is a \$5,000 fine and five years in prison. ::  
— Jonathan Golian

## Survey shows most Americans support Pride merchandise

A transgender woman from Greenville wasMedia advocacy organization GLAAD has released the results of a survey conducted by Ipsos that examines consumer sentiment regarding corporate engagement with LGBTQ communities and Pride Month. The survey also sought consumer opinion on core corporate values and on chief executives' obligations to shareholders on issues that matter.

### Key findings

Seventy percent of Americans say knowing a brand/store offers LGBTQ Pride collections/merchandise either has a positive impact or no impact on their purchasing decisions.

Seventy-one percent of Americans agree that brands and companies should be able to show support to the LGBTQ community during Pride month if they want to.

Sixty-four percent of Black Americans, 55 percent of Hispanic Americans, and 60

percent of those ages 18-34 say they are comfortable with brands publicly supporting LGBTQ organizations and non-profits.

Eighty-five percent of Americans believe CEOs have a responsibility to speak up about things that matter to their consumers and shareholders.

Eighty-one percent believe freedom means we all should be able to believe and behave as we choose, as long as it isn't hurting anyone else.

Seventy-four percent believe companies should care about their bottom lines more than politics.

Americans are more likely to agree than disagree that offering LGBTQ Pride merchandise is no different from offering merchandising with a sports team logo.

"Support for LGBTQ people and employees remains a business imperative that bonds companies to consumers and unites

our country," says Sarah Kate Ellis, President & CEO of GLAAD. "Companies and leaders must listen to consumers who are demanding that brands prioritize values of freedom, inclusion and growth over rank politics. With LGBTQ, Black and Hispanic consumers growing exponentially, companies that bow to opponents of inclusion will miss out on key growth segments."

According to Gallup, the percent of LGBTQ Americans is up over 160 percent since 2012. According to Pew Research, the number of Black Americans is up 33 percent since 2000 and the number of Hispanic Americans is up 85 percent.

In 2022, purchasing power of LGBTQ consumers was estimated to be \$1.4 trillion. Purchasing power of Black consumers is estimated to reach \$1.7 trillion by 2030.

### Findings of survey consistent with data demonstrating widespread support for LGBTQ Americans

Ninety-one percent of non-LGBTQ Americans agree that LGBTQ people should have the freedom to live their life and not be discriminated against (GLAAD).



Recent surveys show Americans supporting LGBTQ+ community and retailers who sell Pride-related goods. CREDIT: Jim Yarbrough

Sixty-one percent of non-LGBTQ adults are very or somewhat supportive of the LGBTQ community (MRI-Simmons), totaling over 160M allies in the U.S. alone.

Fifty-one percent of non-LGBTQ adults say companies/brands should support the LGBTQ community all year, not just during Pride month (MRI-Simmons). ::

— *Qnotes Staff*

## Don't abandon trans community, Tim Walz tells Democratic party

Tim Walz, Minnesota's Governor and former Vice President Kamala Harris's running mate in the last presidential election, is pushing for Democrats to keep fighting for transgender rights as the party finds their way to winning again.

Speaking to *The Independent*, Walz is trying his best to make it clear that abandoning the nation's transgender population will endanger not only them, but the future of the party.

"I think we have to figure out how to not get sucked in and allow that to be the focal point only, and that we can multitask, and we can hold several things simultaneously," Walz said. "We can protect LGBTQ rights and basic human rights at the same time,

we can make sure that we hold drug companies accountable for high prices."

"It's a mistake," he insisted. "And here's the thing: We need to tell people your cost of eggs, your health care being denied, your homeowner's insurance, your lack of getting warning on tornadoes coming has nothing to do with someone's gender."

In the months following the election, a few members of the Democratic party have cautioned against speaking on certain talking points, such as the bans on trans athletes participating in women's sports.

California's Governor Gavin Newsom is one recent case. On the podcast he started earlier this year, speaking to Turning Point USA's Charlie Kirk, Newsom suggested that

trans competitors inclusion was "unfair." Other members, such as Colin Allred, Senate candidate for the Texas seat, and Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio had backed away from their openness about supporting trans rights during their campaigns, yet both ended up losing their races.

Even after losing the election and going back to Minnesota to continue his tenure as state governor, Walz has only increased his time on the road, taking to town halls in areas represented by Republicans at a time where many were abandoning their town hall engagements.

It is at these appearances that Walz has gotten a resounding message from the nation's constituents, and that is for the Democrats to fight back against Donald Trump and his administration.

"What I keep saying is, that Democrats' issues that we care about are things that people do care about, improving their lives,



Tim Walz at one of his tour stops this year. CREDIT: Facebook

they just don't see them get done," he said. "I think the one thing I've seen with what Donald Trump has done is this just moving so fast and on so many fronts. We need to think that same way about the things that improve people's lives [and] making sure that we're doing that." ::

— Jonathan Golian

## AIDS Walk Charlotte returned to Truist Field for 2025

On the morning of Saturday, May 31, RAIN Carolina held its annual AIDS Walk Charlotte event at Truist Field.

Now in its 29th year since first kicking off in 1997, AIDS Walk Charlotte has been the state's largest HIV fundraising walk, collectively raising \$3.3 million since its inception. Via RAIN's fundraising event, the funds have gone on to empower those living with HIV as well as those at risk through programs and essential services offered by the organization.

Through these offerings, RAIN is able to educate others about the disease, breaking down the barriers of stigma and discrimination while advocating for those afflicted with the condition. HIV affects everyone, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation; and RAIN works every day towards saving lives dealing with it.

Included with the services and programs that RAIN provides is medical case management, programs based around empower-

ing youth between the ages of 13 to 24 dealing with the disease, health insurance assistance, mental health counseling, PrEP/PEP programs, early prevention services, wellness through affirming services and educational programs, HIV/STI testing, client assistance, and outreach events promoting awareness & prevention education.

As of their 2024 fact sheet chronicling each of these services, RAIN has served 540 unique clients as of last year, with 72 people having received multiple services and program initiatives. As of their records, a majority of their clientele self-identify as being part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The roughly two-mile walk was completed by most in around 30 minutes, making it accessible to participants of all ages. As a family-oriented fundraiser, RAIN welcomed anyone who wished to participate and show their compassion for Charlotte region residents who face challenges in accessing resources and health services, particularly

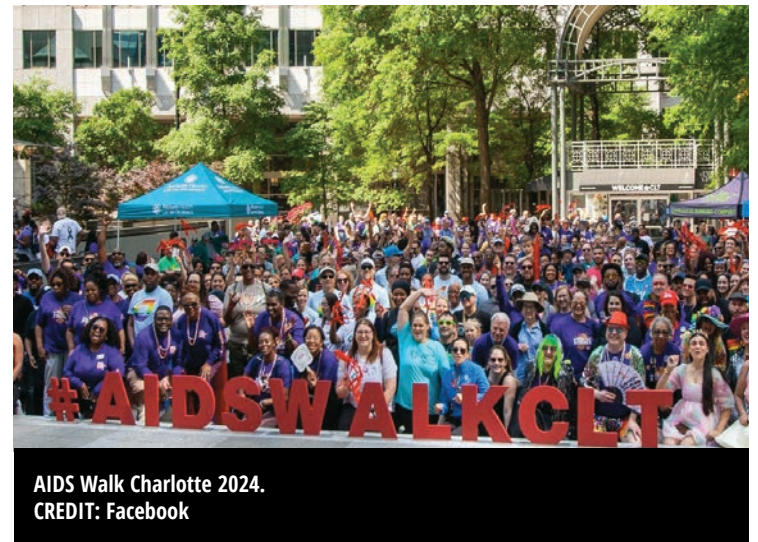
those affected by HIV stigma.

For those who wanted to take part in the effort against HIV/AIDS but not the AIDS Walk, donations were also collected in person. Contributions to RAIN are accepted in person, by mail or arranged pick-up year round.

Check-ins for the successful event began at 9 a.m., with morning events commencing at 10:30 a.m., followed by the walk at 11 a.m.

Donating after the event electronically can be done at <https://carolinarain.org/event/aids-walk-charlotte#donate>.

As of May 26, the top five AIDS Walk teams had raised approximately \$60,000+ total. Included in that list (in order of funds



AIDS Walk Charlotte 2024. CREDIT: Facebook

raised so far) are The Woodshed Bar, RAIN, Team Synchrony, Myers Park Baptist Church and Bank of America. Around \$24,000 had been raised by another five participating organizations. ::

— Jonathan Golian

## Shelby High Students win lawsuit in court case about LGBTQ+ quiz game

In a resounding win for a student's club at Shelby High School, the Cleveland County Schools Board of Education has reached a settlement in a lawsuit, *M.K. v. Fisher*, which alleged the school had violated students' First Amendment rights.

As previously covered by *Qnotes*, a student club at Shelby High school had been banned by the board from playing a text-only quiz game highlighting LGBTQ+ people who have made significant contributions to American society, deeming the activity "indecent." The case had been taken up by The ACLU of North Carolina and Charles Johnson of Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson, PA, resulting in a lawsuit being filed this past February.

The club at Shelby High School was student-founded and previously discussed topics not covered in school curriculum, such

as the Black Lives Matter movement, the war in Gaza, Women's History Month, suicide prevention and breast cancer awareness.

Reacting to the "indecent" label given by the plaintiff, only referred to as "M.K." in the court filings, the lawsuit claims that the game that the club had originally set up did not include any depictions of sex, violence, illegal drug use or any other inappropriate content. Instead, it "asks students to identify people like Harvey Milk, Lady Gaga and Ellen DeGeneres, as well as pieces of popular media that feature LGBTQ+ characters or actors," according to the lawsuit.

Under the terms of the settlement, the student group will be allowed to play the game with students who return a parental permission slip. The settlement also requires the board to publish a statement affirming students' First Amendment

rights and to apologize for having previously denied the plaintiff's requests. Specifically, the Board recognized "that student speech plays an essential role in fostering a vibrant, respectful and inclusive educational environment," and apologized for "the delay in allowing this student to exercise her constitutional rights."

"We are glad to have achieved such a positive outcome for the plaintiff and all students at Shelby High School, who can now exercise their First Amendment rights without fear of censorship," said Ivy Johnson, staff attorney for the ACLU of North Carolina.

"While LGBTQ+ students are being targeted by politicians and facing discriminatory policies, M.K. made an effort to uplift and celebrate the contributions of LGBTQ+



A photo of Shelby High School in Cleveland County, N.C. CREDIT: Facebook

people to our society. This settlement is a victory for free speech at a time when student speech in particular has been under attack." ::

— Jonathan Golian

## 'Big Beautiful Bill' spells big ugly trouble for LGBTQ+ healthcare

In the dead of night on May 21, Donald Trump and Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) pushed House Republicans to pass the GOP-led 'Big Beautiful Bill,' a piece of legislation that aims to cut millions of people out of programs while making previous tax cuts for the ultra-wealthy.

The cuts outlined in the over 1,000 pages that make up the legislation, literally called the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," aim to increase funding for immigration enforcement and raise the debt limit, all while structuring down programs like Medicaid, SNAP, Medicare and the Affordable Care Act.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, in a press release posted the day after the bill passed the house by the tightest of margins (215-214), the

Republican proposals inside the bill could kick 13.7 million people off of Medicaid. As Medicaid is a crucial source of health care for low-income LGBTQ-identifying people around the country, this would also affect 22 to 25 percent of LGBTQ+ adults, including 21 percent of transgender individuals and 40 percent of people living with HIV.

Not only will programs that the LGBTQ+ community relies on be wiped out, but GOP representatives added additional legislation to the bill specifically targeting transgender people.

The reconfiguring of the bill added in a second provision, forbidding the use of federal Medicaid and CHIP funding for medically necessary health care for transgender people of all ages. Specifically, this would

prevent states from offering medically necessary health care to all transgender people through ACA health plans by excluding this care from the definition of "essential health benefits," regardless of age.

Kelley Robinson, President of HRC, gave a statement regarding the bill passing the house and what it would mean for a majority of Americans if signed into law in its current state.

"People in this country want policies and solutions that make life better and expand access to the American Dream. Instead, anti-equality lawmakers voted to give handouts to billionaires built on the backs of hardworking people, with devastating consequences for the LGBTQ+ community," the statement reads.

"If the cuts to programs like Medicaid and SNAP or resources like Planned Parenthood clinics weren't devastating enough, House Republicans added a last-minute provision that expands its attacks on access to best practice health care to transgender adults. This cruel addition shows



Speaker Mike Johnson is one of two people responsible for frantically pushing the 'Big Beautiful Bill' through the House. CREDIT: Facebook

their priorities have never been about lowering costs or expanding health care access — but in targeting people simply for who they are. These lawmakers have abandoned their constituents, and as they head back to their districts, know this: They will hear from us." ::

— Jonathan Golian

# Jonny Saldana resigns from Charlotte Gaymers Network

Miami native turned a small idea into a major player in five years



by Jonathan Golian  
Qnotes Staff Writer

Jonny Saldana, the executive director and one of the founders of the Charlotte Gaymers Network, is stepping down and handing off the organization to the next generation.

Where the organization stands today is a far cry from where Saldana, and former co-founder Zach Smith, started when the two were just holding small events in a few cubicles in Tabbris on South Boulevard.

Within five years' time, the organization was able to grow their flagship event, Gaymer Gathering, from a handful of friends and curious on-lookers during the COVID-19 pandemic to bringing out hundreds yearly in many large communal spaces.

Under Saldana's guidance, with help from leadership teams, the organization was able to move beyond the borders of Charlotte to bring a unique brand of queer hospitality and gaming excellence to major events, including Anime Weekend Atlanta;

Kami-Con and Huntsville Anime Invasion in Alabama; FanimeCon and the Creating Change Conference in California; and Pittsburgh Pride.

The largest impact CGN has had with Saldana at the helm remains in the Queen City. Through the development of programs like Project Blue Shell, CGN helped reduce school suspensions, increase standardized testing scores and overall school attendance. Then there's the success of Project Save Point, a privatized mutual aid fund focusing on transgender individuals in the Charlotte community.

"As I reflect on the journey of building the Charlotte Gaymers Network, I'm overwhelmed with gratitude for the many hands and hearts that helped



Jonny Saldana and Zach Smith, the founders of Charlotte Gaymers Network, pose above the organization's banners at Saldana's former residence on 36th Street.  
CREDIT: Keilen McNeil

bring this vision to life," Saldana stated in a press release. "What began as a simple idea, a space where queer gamers could find connection and joy, has grown into

something far greater than I ever imagined. CGN has become a sanctuary, a launchpad, and a rallying point for a community that often struggles to find space for itself. Our achievements are collective, born from late nights, bold ideas and an unwavering belief in the power of chosen family."

Taking over for Saldana will be Will Jeffcoat-McLeod, currently serving as CGN's deputy director.

"Since joining CGN, Will has shown up with unwavering commitment, vision and a fierce passion that has propelled many of our operations forward," Saldana says of his successor. "His leadership is grounded in purpose and driven by a deep belief in the power of our community. I am confident that under Will's guidance, CGN's mission will not only endure, it will evolve. He is poised to inspire radical change and lead our organization into a bold new chapter, forging a path through the unknown with courage and clarity."

"It's been the greatest honor of my life to serve this community. I've laughed, I've cried [and] I've learned. I leave this role not with sadness, but with profound gratitude." ::

# T.H.E. Field Day celebrates wellness, movement and joy

Free Charlotte event offers activity, games and health resources for transgender community and allies



by Liz Schob  
Qnotes Staff Writer

Charlotte Trans Health is bringing back one of the city's most unique wellness experiences designed specifically for transgender and gender-diverse people and their allies. T.H.E. Field Day: Moving Toward Wellness will take place on Friday, June 13, 2025, from 1 to 7 p.m. at Central Piedmont Community College's Worrell Gym, located at 1201 Elizabeth Avenue in Charlotte. The event is free and open to the public.

An expansion of the highly successful T.H.E. Summit held last year, this year's Field Day is designed to create an inclusive, supportive space where transgender and gender-diverse individuals can explore wellness through movement, community-building and education. With a wide range of physical activities, recreational games and wellness resources, the event is designed to promote both physical and mental well-being in a safe and affirming environment.

The afternoon will feature an array of movement-based workshops, including

yoga, self-defense, and beginner voguing – each geared toward building confidence and encouraging joyful, body-positive movement. Attendees looking for casual fun can enjoy outdoor games such as kickball and corn hole, or cheer on others during friendly recreational match-ups. These activities are designed to be adaptable and accessible, welcoming all bodies, skill levels and identities.

Alongside its physical components, T.H.E. Field Day also includes a lineup of wellness-focused resources and educational content. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage in presentations covering topics such as mental health care, nutrition and holistic approaches to personal wellness. Hands-on demonstrations will allow participants to try new techniques, gather tools for their own well-being, and explore alternative methods of self-care. Informational booths will be hosted by local organizations working to promote health equity, gender-affirming care and community support for LGBTQ+ individuals.

To enhance the festival-style atmosphere, the event will also feature live music, food and opportunities to build community connections. Whether coming to participate in a workshop, speak with healthcare providers or simply spend time

in a joyful and affirming space, attendees will find something meaningful to engage with throughout the day.

T.H.E. Field Day is made possible through a collaboration between Charlotte Trans Health, Q Fitness and Wellness, Stonewall Sports Charlotte and Qnotes Carolinas. Each partner brings expertise in LGBTQ+ wellness, fitness and advocacy to help ensure the event is inclusive, engaging and impactful.

Charlotte Trans Health is a nonprofit, multidisciplinary collective of healthcare providers committed to reducing health disparities and improving access to gender-affirming care. The event is funded through their PATH Program, which is supported by Mecklenburg County via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). This federal funding initiative allows local governments to support communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including transgender and gender-diverse individuals.

By offering accessible fitness program- ing, educational resources and



Trans Health at Charlotte Pride 2024.  
CREDIT: Facebook

community engagement in a celebratory environment, T.H.E. Field Day aims to create a model for inclusive, community-driven health and wellness. Organizers encourage individuals of all ages, backgrounds and experience levels to attend. ::

For more information or to register, visit [charlottetranshealth.org](http://charlottetranshealth.org) or [qnotescarolinas.com/connect](http://qnotescarolinas.com/connect).

# More ugly news from Trump's 'Big Beautiful Bill'

Additional provisions would give elected officials carte blanche for potentially illegal activity with no repercussions



by Jonathan Golian  
Qnotes Staff Writer

Since Donald Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill Act" narrowly passed the House of Representatives the Thursday before Memorial Day Weekend, new revelations have constantly come to light about well-hidden provisions within the bill that Trump's GOP have tried to sneak within the 1,100-page document. One such provision recently discovered is a one-sentence line that would weaken the power of U.S. judges to enforce contempt when the government defies court orders.

The unearthed provision would prevent federal courts, including the Supreme Court, from enforcing contempt orders unless the plaintiffs have posted a monetary bond, which rarely happens in cases against the government.



American democracy may quickly become a thing of the past if Trump's 'Big Beautiful Bill' passes the senate.

"No court of the United States may enforce a contempt citation for failure to comply with an injunction or temporary restraining order if no security was given when the injunction or order was issued," the provision says. It applies retroactively.

"Security" refers to monetary bonds that can be used in private litigation when one party seeks to ask a judge to issue an injunction blocking the actions of another party, such as a company trying to prevent a rival from selling a product. If an injunction

is later reversed, the bond helps cover the defendant's losses.

The provision follows a White House memo in March which directed heads of government agencies to request that plaintiffs post a bond when seeking an injunction against an agency policy. The Trump administration said the measure would deter frivolous lawsuits.

Judges often don't require bonds in cases against the government. In a recent ongoing case by two small toymakers, Learning Resources and hand2mind, suing the Trump administration because of tariffs, the plaintiffs said the bond that had been requested by the government would be more costly than tariffs and would nullify the benefit of an injunction. The judge on Thursday, May 29, set the bond at \$100 and blocked the tariffs against the two companies.

Federal courts have been one of the major checks against the Trump administration during his second term, having blocked numerous policies the White House has produced through Executive Order. As bonds are not required for most of the cases being brought up to courts, if the House Bill provision becomes law, judges would lose substantial power by being unable to enforce contempt orders, which are utilized to bring parties into compliance.

Twenty-one Democrats from the House wrote to Speaker Mike Johnson on May 20, urging him to strike the provision from the bill. "This provision would neutralize valid injunctions and leave courts powerless to act in the face of open defiance," the letter states.

Eric Kashdan, senior legal counsel with the Campaign Legal Center, reasoned that judges could comply with the provision by setting bonds at a nominal amount and old cases could be reopened, but he tempered that conclusion with it being a time-consuming and burdensome workaround.

"You know what the government is go-

ing to do in the meantime?" said Kashdan, whose organization has sued the Trump administration over a voting policy. "It's free to ignore those orders."

Trevor Potter, CLC president and former

Republican chairman of the Federal Election Commission, released the following statement in response to the bill:

"The House is trying to use budget reconciliation as a Trojan horse to enact President Trump's agenda across our govern-

ment while avoiding the Senate filibuster rules — in doing so, they are poised to severely undermine our democracy.

"In one provision, Congress aims to ban the enforcement of state or local laws regulating artificial intelligence (AI) — even those designed to stop election manipulation. More than 20 states have already created such laws after seeing that bad actors can use AI to create fake content that could mislead voters or discourage electoral

participation. Congress should be following the example set by these states. We need federal laws that address the challenges AI can create for our democracy, rather than setting voters up to face a deluge of false information and denying their right to make informed decisions at the ballot box.

"In another provision, Congress aims to shield the Trump administration, and any government actor, from accountability when they break the law. This outrageous change would undermine the rule of law and allow government officials, including the president, to escape the possibility of being held in contempt of court if they violate court orders. The provision would even apply to court orders and injunctions issued before this law takes effect. In essence, the provision could in a single stroke render thousands of prior orders across the country unenforceable via contempt proceedings. The rule of law in our country would be dangerously undermined if this provision becomes law.

"CLC urges the House to remove these harmful provisions from its legislation. If they remain in place, we urge every lawmaker to vote NO and defeat this budget reconciliation package to protect our democracy." ::

**"No court of the United States may enforce a contempt citation for failure to comply with an injunction or temporary restraining order if no security was given when the injunction or order was issued"**

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# Sponsorships drop for U.S. Pride events

Many left wondering who will continue support in the face of anti-LGBTQ+ forces



by Jonathan Golian  
Qnotes Staff Writer

In light of the current political and cultural landscape that has engulfed the United States since Donald Trump's return to the White House, what was once unthinkable has come to pass.

In an effort to avoid a battle with the new administration over Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, (DEI) several big name companies rolled back previously celebrated efforts, which previously connected with the wider population. Google, Amazon, IBM, Walmart and Meta have gutted entire DEI departments, which were dedicated to bringing on different talents and championing visions of a better world for workers and consumers alike.

Despite continuing Republican efforts, there has been some pushback. Large groups of people have spoken with their pocketbooks, going so far as to plan out specific periods for boycotting businesses in order to enact an "economic blackout." Target, where a majority of its messaging had been made with its DEI programs as well as support of the LGBTQ+ community through apparel and other sales saw a 3 percent dip in the first quarter of 2025 due to blowback from consumers.

The company acknowledged this in a recent earnings call for supporters and stockholders. Target CEO Brian Cornell described an "exceptionally challenging environment" that saw declines in both traffic and sales.

"We faced several additional headwinds this quarter including five consecutive months of declining consumer confidence, uncertainty regarding the impact of potential tariffs and the reaction to the updates we shared ..." Cornell admitted. "While we believe each of these factors played a role in our first quarter performance, we can't reliably estimate the impact of each one separately."

Many see this as one side of the battle going on in America as of the last five or so months, all defined by fear of what Donald Trump and his administration will do if one corporation or another is found to even faintly support DEI programs, which also includes a strong support of LGBTQ+ initiatives, like Pride events. As has been feared by many, companies not wanting to be seen as supporting minority culture in the United States have started to back up, causing festivals to lose vital financial support.

After years of what many had called "rainbow capitalism" by corporations, companies have both put themselves in the shadows as to not be seen alongside the events they'd been longtime partners of, or just outright pulled out. As established, much of this is being done mainly in part concerning potential DEI investigations by the federal government, along with possible backlash by conservative activists and consumers, which represent another side of the nation's counterculture wars.

According to a survey conducted by Gravity Research, 39 percent of executives have planned to decrease their recognition of Pride events in 2025, which include



Financial woes: sponsorship misgivings for Pride celebrations are impacting events around the country.

city parades. One example is this year's NYC Pride March, where platinum sponsors Garnier, Mastercard and Target have now backed away, causing an estimated shortfall of \$750,000 in operating budget for Heritage of Pride, according to *The New York Times*.

Other cities have seen similar hits, like Anheuser-Busch InBev dropping out in St. Louis and Diageo doing the same in San Francisco, both of which were key sponsors. The list seems to be the longest at one of this year's biggest events taking place in the states, WorldPride, being put on in Washington D.C. by the Capital Pride Alliance. As reported by *bizbash.com*, former sponsors including Comcast/Xfinity, Booz Allen Hamilton, Mastercard, Deloitte, Visa, and Amtrak are stepping out of this year's festivities, blowing a hole in the high-profile happening.

Nearby, Atlanta is also seeing a hit with its funding. As reported by Atlanta First News on May 30, the city's Pride Run, which kicked off festivities on June 1, experienced a nearly 45 percent drop in donor support.

"We've definitely seen a change, and it's rough," Troy Newkirk, Atlanta Pride Partnerships director, told Atlanta News First. He confirmed some former contributors said no to increasing past donations and pointed to political and economic factors; and others are apparently fearful of the Trump Administration targeting LGBTQ+ initiatives and cuts to DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) programming. While donors have contributed, some have insisted on anonymity.

So, if these kinds of pull-outs are happening in other cities, where does that leave somewhere like Charlotte? According to

Meredith Thompson, the managing director of Charlotte Pride, much of what has befallen other townships has yet to be seen.

In North Carolina many of our Pride festivals don't fall exclusively in June. Charlotte's own festivities will start two months after June kicks off the main festivals around the nation, so there is still a wait-and-see approach as to what shortfalls may occur here. As Thompson put it to *Qnotes*, Charlotte Pride has its eyes open to the chain of the events in other places, and it's only a matter of time here.

"So it's still, believe it or not, kind of early to tell. I will say that some [sponsors] are taking longer to hear back from," Thompson said. "And you know, I do predict that we're going to see some of them step down the level of support or not wanting their logo publicly included on marketing. So there definitely is a change, and there definitely is some stepping back."

"It's really disappointing because I think that collectively, if they sort of all did the right thing, that it would have a lot of power, and I think that they're acting out of fear of retaliation from this administration and from the reach that it has," Thompson also said.

"[But] there are some people that, while I haven't heard from yet, some of them are staying at the same level, I think I've had very few who are sort of stepping up support. [But] you know, at the end of the day, I know we're going to be okay."

Thompson indicated there are a few nodding hopes at businesses local to Charlotte that might bring unexpected help. Despite Target at large rolling back their DEI measures, they will be giving to Charlotte's festivities this year in goods,

like well-needed waters for the expected heatwave sure to hit the Queen City during Pride festivities.

"Target hasn't been like a huge sponsor of ours, but they are going to get us pallets of water for the festival this year, which is huge because, you know, I'm not sure yet if the other sponsor who used to get us water is," Thompson revealed.

Along with Target's help, other top supporters like Krispy Kreme and McDonalds, through an independent franchisee, are sticking around to give Charlotte Pride the support that is desperately needed to make the festivities happen.

As Thompson told us, some of the continued shows of faith are due to the good relationships kept up with. "You know, it was surprising because we all wanted to boycott Target [because] of what we've read and heard. But then, you know, when I had lunch with the Target representative, they were great, and they're like, 'What do you need? You need water. I'll give it to you,' so ... it's all about that relationship and that person who maybe has some power within that corporation, and just kind of getting their ear," Thompson said.

Will Charlotte Pride be okay? The answer at the moment is a bit unclear and made more complex by what Thompson, working to make sure things go off without too many hitches, has witnessed.

There seems to be as much hope as there is fear in that respect, but with companies keeping up the tradition in some areas and others stepping up – even in such a negative political climate – that's a good sign our community has plenty of friends and allies who aren't afraid to let everyone know they're still supportive. ::

# Raleigh celebrates Pride 2025

LGBTQ-centered events play out all month long in North Carolina's capital



by Jonathan Golian  
Qnotes Staff Writer

While Charlotte has a few months yet to prepare for its annual Pride celebration and related events, mainly taking part in August, Raleigh is already *putting on the ritz* starting Sunday, June 1. If you're planning on visiting North Carolina's capital city over the course of the month, you can look forward to a bevy of Pride-related activities and presentations from the LGBT Center of Raleigh and other venues in the area.

Here's a sampling of the events being thrown in June, and a website address — <https://www.lgbtcenterofraleigh.com/orp-events> — for more details on everything coming up.



The LGBT Center of Raleigh in the annual Pride march.  
CREDIT: Facebook

ing Pride Month is important and ways to support the rich diversity of Raleigh's local communities.

**Date:** June 6, 2025  
**Event/Venue:** Pride Fashion Showcase at Artspace  
**Location:** 201 E Davie St, 27601  
**Time:** 5 to 10 p.m.  
**Details:** Come out to the Artspace for a night of fashion, glam and community as models stun on the runway.

**Date:** June 7, 2025  
**Event/Venue:** Out In Nature at Historic Oak View County Park  
**Location:** 4028 Carya Dr, 27610  
**Time:** 10 to 11 a.m.  
**Details:** Celebrate Pride and be Out in Nature at Oak View. Join up for a staff-led, all-ages, relaxed, informal walk around the park to socialize and enjoy the surrounding

Books And Coffee's Open Mic Night. The featured performer of the night will be poet and author Josh Tvrdy.

**Date:** June 14, 2025  
**Event/Venue:** Hartwell & Urban Pothos Presents: Pride Market & Drag Show  
**Location:** 620 W South St, 27603  
**Time:** 12 to 4 p.m.  
**Details:** Hartwell, in partnership with Urban Pothos, brings together their 4th Annual Pride Market & Drag Show, benefiting the LGBT Center of Raleigh. The day will consist of drag shows, vendors, artists, food trucks and fun.

**Date:** June 20 to 21, 2025  
**Event/Venue:** Out! Raleigh Pride on Fayetteville Street in Downtown  
**Location:** Fayetteville Street, Raleigh  
**Time:** 6 to 10pm (Friday) & 12 to 7 p.m. (Saturday)  
**Details:** Out! Raleigh Pride (ORP) is the second largest Pride festival in North Carolina and will be held June 20-21, 2025. This event provides visibility for a historically marginalized community that has its own unique intersectionality (race, class, neurodivergence, disabilities, etc.) that can further make community members vulnerable. This event provides a unique opportunity for those outside of the community

to engage with LGBTQ+ folks, and become more familiar with issues the community faces.

**Link:** <https://www.lgbtcenterofraleigh.com/out-raleigh-pride>

**Date:** June 28, 2025  
**Event/Venue:** Queer Field Day at Fred Fletcher Park  
**Location:** 820 Clay St, 27605  
**Time:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
**Details:** Come join us for a day of fun and games at Fred Fletcher Park. This event is all about celebrating the LGBTQ+ community and having a blast together. Get ready for exciting activities like sack races, tug-of-war and maybe even a water balloon toss.

**Date:** June 29, 2025  
**Venue:** Community In Nature at Lake Crabtree County Park  
**Location:** 1400 Aviation Pkwy, 27560  
**Time:** 10 a.m. to noon  
**Details:** Join up on a short hike and craft while the group discusses how nature can help foster a sense of community for people in marginalized groups. The hosts will show how the environment is more about cooperation than "survival of the fittest" and how everyone can learn about generosity from nature. ::

**Calendar:**

**Date:** June 1, 2025  
**Event/Venue:** Pride Kick-Off at Raleigh Iron Works  
**Location:** 1101 E Whitaker Mill Rd, 27604  
**Time:** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
**Details:** Raleigh Iron Works will start the Pride Month ceremonies off with a celebration of community, creativity, and connection. Hosted by Raleigh Pride, enjoy a live DJ, stunning art installations, family-friendly activities and explore LGBTQ+ retailers including Urban Pothos, Beatniks and The Flourish Market. Plus, connect with local community resources supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

**Date:** June 5, 2025  
**Event/Venue:** Coffee & Conversations at A Place At The Table  
**Location:** 300 W Hargett St #50, 27601  
**Time:** 9 to 10 a.m.  
**Details:** Sit down and take up a cup with members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community when the LGBT Center of Raleigh hosts a gathering at A Place At The Table. The hosts will touch on the current state of LGBTQ+ rights, why celebrating and honor-

nature and history of the site. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes and be sure to bring water. Free. Registration required.  
**Link:** <https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/wakeparks/activity/search/detail/8052>

**Date:** June 8, 2025  
**Event/Venue:** Pride Ride: LGBTQ+ Trolley Tour at Mordecai Historic Park  
**Location:** 1 Mimosa St, 27604  
**Time:** 1 to 4 p.m.  
**Details:** Join Raleigh Historic Sites for a "Pride Ride" celebrating the city's LGBTQ+ history. This tour will highlight historic locations, neighborhoods, businesses, churches and other points of interest important to the evolution of Raleigh's LGBTQ+ community.  
**Link:** <https://raleighnc.gov/parks-and-recreation/events/pride-ride-lgbtq-trolley-tour>

**Date:** June 10, 2025  
**Event/Venue:** Local Poet Reading & Open Mic at Blackbird Books and Coffee  
**Location:** 323 Blake St, 27601  
**Time:** 6 to 8 p.m.  
**Details:** Come hang out for a night of poetry, storytelling and song at Blackbird

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# Examining Ballroom and House Culture:

The history and rise of the Carolina Chapter of the Artistic Haus of Telfar

by Qnotes Staff

In the late 1960s, Ballroom culture and Houses originated in New York City's LGBTQ+ community of Harlem, in response to racism and exclusion experienced by Black and Latin LGBTQ+ individuals from white drag ball presentations of the time.

In the years that followed, *Houses* evolved. They became alternative family units, primarily comprised of Black and Latin LGBTQ+ individuals, led by "mothers" or "fathers," who were and are experienced members of the ballroom scene and the community. They continue to provide guidance and support to the "children" of the house, who are considered siblings and share a strong sense of kinship.

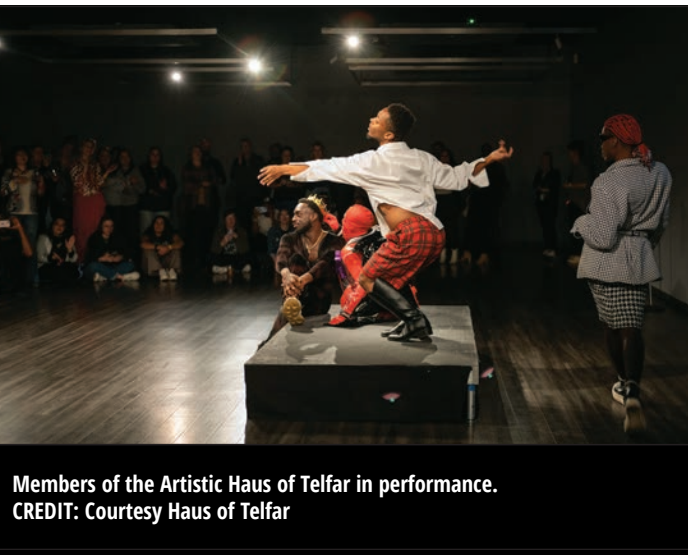
Initially, Houses served as a support system for those who felt ostracized by mainstream society. In today's world, they continue to offer the support described, while also reaching out in service to others in need through artistic expression and creativity.

Houses capturing significant success and longevity can be recognized as "legendary" or "iconic," and roots run deep in the Black and Latin LGBTQ+ Ballroom Scene, with members often participating in compe-

genuine collaboration. It's a story of growth and unwavering dedication towards creating a meaningful impact both in and beyond community.

## Humble beginnings

The idea of CCAHT was born out of a collective desire to push boundaries and redefine what a house of artistry and community could be. With five founding members who adopted the surname of Telfar and identified as Gotti, Olympus, Pikachu, Aries and Midas, they faced the daunting challenge of establishing their presence amid a landscape populated by other established and creative chapters. Yet, they made up for what they lacked in numbers



Members of the Artistic Haus of Telfar in performance. CREDIT: Courtesy Haus of Telfar

## The power of innovation and collaboration

Key principles shared by chapter leaders are central to their success. Affectionately known as The Carolina Mother, Travis Barnes (Telfar) says, "*The chapter develops through innovation and genuine collaboration.*" Those words capture how CCAHT members have united to create something greater than individual contributions.

Gotti Telfar, the chapter's Father, reflects on the importance of persistence and structure. "It took persistence and structure to build what this chapter is," he says. "And how different we are compared to other chapters of other houses."

## Performance

Their artistic journey has taken them to renowned venues in Charlotte and Columbia, S.C., such as The Mint Museum Uptown, the Harvey B. Gantt Center and the Columbia Museum of Art. Recently, they performed at BOOM! Intersection. Performing at respected venues highlights the chapter's growing influence and recognition as cultural ambassadors. Each performance showcases their commitment

to elevating marginalized voices and developing a space for creativity.

## Commitment to Community Service

Beyond the stage, The Carolina Chapter remains deeply committed to community. Their outreach efforts involve partnerships with organizations like The Mimosa Way and RAIN CLT, where they actively participate in initiatives to empower youth, support mental health, and develop community resilience.

## Looking Ahead: Growth and Development

CCAHT's journey is just beginning. With a strong foundation of innovation and collaboration, plans for expanding its individual and community outreach efforts are underway. Leadership envisions a future where the chapter shines as a beacon for emerging artists and community organizers, grounded in its commitment to serve community needs and aspirations.



titions that include stylized dancing, fashion presentations and other artistic forms of cultural expression.

The idea of House and Ballroom as a part of American LGBTQ+ culture was gradually introduced to the world through pop songs like "Deep in Vogue" (1989) by Malcolm McClaren and "Vogue" (1990) by Madonna. However, the film "Paris is Burning" (1991) was the pivotal moment that brought the phenomenon into the world spotlight.

In the mix of houses to be found around the country, North Carolina is home to the **Carolina Chapter of the Artistic Haus of Telfar** (CCAHT). Founded in 2022 with just five passionate members, CCAHT has blossomed into a force of creativity, resilience and unity.

Their journey from humble beginnings to earning prestigious accolades and performing at esteemed cultural institutions exemplifies what can be achieved when innovation meets

## A journey of growth and recognition

Over the past two years, their dedication has led to rewarding accomplishments. CCAHT has not only grown in size but has also garnered recognition for its innovative performances and community engagement. Their hard work and artistry culminated in being awarded titles of *New House of the Year*, *Father of the Year* and *Mother of the Year* – accolades that symbolize the chapter's evolution from a small group of enthusiasts to a beacon of inspiration and excellence.

Each award reflects their commitment to pushing creative boundaries, promoting diverse voices, and embodying unity and innovation. Other awards they've been honored with include (in the annual category) "Realness With a Twist," "Streetwear" and "Kiki Labels;" as well as the *Icon Shady Marciano Blueprint Impact Award* and the *Ceas Pink Lady Vanguard Award*.



Haus of Telfar's Travis Barnes. CREDIT: Facebook

## Inspiration for all

The story of The Chapter of The Artistic Haus of Telfar reminds us that passionate individuals can be united by a shared vision. Their journey demonstrates how collaboration and dedication can transform a small group into a significant force, inspiring other artists and leaders to have a positive impact on lives and communities.

As the Carolina Chapter continues to grow and evolve, their story remains a beacon of hope and inspiration. It exemplifies how art can serve as a catalyst for community building, cultural expression and social change.

Its journey from five members to an award-winning and performing, recognized chapter is a testament to what can be achieved through innovation, persistence and genuine collaboration. ::

# RFK Jr. ends COVID vaccine recommendations

Health & Wellness

by Jennifer Shutt | NC Newsline

U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. changed the federal government's recommendation for the coronavirus vaccine May 28, saying healthy children and healthy pregnant people no longer need to get it.

Kennedy, a longtime vaccine skeptic who had to broker several deals with Republican senators to secure confirmation, didn't explain why he was making the change in a brief video.

"I couldn't be more pleased to announce that as of today the COVID vaccine for healthy children and healthy pregnant women has been removed from the CDC recommended immunization schedule," Kennedy said. "Last year the Biden administration urged healthy children to get yet another COVID shot despite the lack of any clinical data to support the repeat booster strategy in children."

National Institutes of Health Director Jay Bhattacharya and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Martin A. Makary both spoke briefly during the social media video to say they supported the decision. But neither pointed to new studies regarding COVID-19 boosters or any evidence of safety issues.

"It's common sense and it's good science," Bhattacharya said.

Kennedy made several promises to Louisiana Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy – chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee – in order to secure Cassidy's vote so that Kennedy could be confirmed as HHS secretary.

Among those was that Kennedy would "maintain the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advisory committee on immunization practices recommendations without changes."

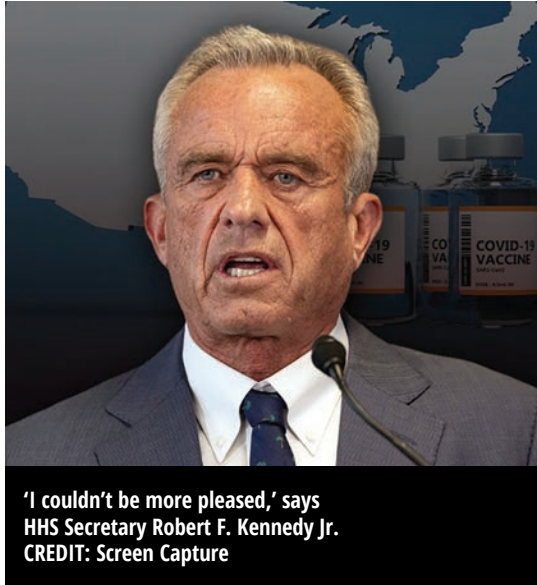
Cassidy's office did not respond to a request for comment.

Dr. Steven J. Fleischman, president of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, said the organization was "concerned about and extremely disappointed by the announcement that HHS will no longer recommend COVID vaccination during pregnancy."

"As ob-gyns who treat patients every day, we have seen firsthand how dangerous COVID infection can be during pregnancy and for newborns who depend on maternal antibodies from the vaccine for protection," Fleischman wrote. "We also understand that despite the change in recommendations from HHS, the science has not changed."

"It is very clear that COVID infection during pregnancy can be catastrophic and lead to major disability, and it can cause devastating consequences for families. The COVID vaccine is safe during pregnancy, and vaccination can protect our patients and their infants."

Dr. Sean O'Leary, chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Infectious Diseases, wrote in a statement HHS' "decision bypasses a long-established, evidence-based process used to ensure vaccine safety and ignores the



'I couldn't be more pleased,' says HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. CREDIT: Screen Capture

expertise of independent medical experts, including members of CDC committees who are examining the evidence regarding the vaccine to make recommendations for the fall."

"By removing the recommendation, the decision could strip families of choice," O'Leary wrote. "Those who want to

vaccinate may no longer be able to, as the implications for insurance coverage remain unclear. It's also unclear whether health care workers would be eligible to be vaccinated."

"What is clear is that pregnant women, infants and young children are at higher risk of hospitalization from COVID, and the safety of the COVID vaccine has been widely demonstrated."

Dr. Jerome Adams, the surgeon general during Trump's first administration, wrote in a detailed social media post that Kennedy's announcement "raises significant concerns, as it overlooks both available evidence, and the complexities of public health."

"Shifting from vaccine mandates to outright prohibitions does not reflect medical freedom; it represents a different

form of government intervention, one that restricts individual choice and access to evidence-based care," Adams wrote. "A balanced approach would prioritize informed decision-making, ensuring that vaccines remain available to those who need them while respecting personal autonomy."

"Hoping as this policy change is implemented, anyone who is truly high risk can still easily get a vaccine, and that we don't let politics trump science, health and previous proclamations about 'personal choice.'"

American Public Health Association Executive Director Dr. Georges C Benjamin wrote in a statement that "[v]accines offer the best protection from severe symptoms and death associated with the COVID-19 virus for all populations."

"This decision by Secretary Kennedy puts kids, pregnant moms and their babies at risk of unnecessary suffering that is preventable. Lots of questions remain as to how HHS leadership plans to implement this poorly thought out announcement that is not supported by the scientific evidence and our national experience."

An HHS press secretary wrote in an email to States Newsroom that "as part of the Trump administration's commitment to common sense, the COVID-19 vaccine will be removed from the CDC's recommended immunization schedule."

"With the COVID-19 pandemic behind us, it is time to move forward," the spokesperson wrote. "HHS and the CDC remain committed to gold standard science and to ensuring the health and well-being of all Americans — especially our nation's children — using common sense." ::

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# Books for Pride Month!

Out in Print



by Terri Schlichenmeyer  
Contributing Writer

Books for Pride Month  
Various authors  
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You're going to be on your feet a lot this month. Marching in parades, dancing in the streets, standing up for people in your community. But you're also likely to have some time to rest and reflect — and with these great new books, to read...

First, dip into a biography with **"Marsha: The Joy and Defiance of Marsha P. Johnson"** by **Tourmaline** (Tiny Rep Books, \$30), a nice look at an icon who, rumor has it, threw the brick that started a revolution. It's a lively tale about Marsha P. Johnson, her life, her activism before Stonewall and afterward. Reading this interesting and highly-researched history is a great way to launch your Pride Month.

For the reader who can't live without music, try **"The Dad Rock That Made Me a Woman"** by **Niko Stratis** (University of Texas Press, \$27.95), the story of being trans, searching for your place in the world, and finding it in a certain comfortable

genre of music. Also look for **"The Lonely Veteran's Guide to Companionship"** by **Bronson Lemer** (University of Wisconsin Press, \$19.95), a collection of essays that make up a memoir of this and that, of being queer, basic training, teaching overseas, influential books and life.

If you still have room for one more memoir, try **"Walk Like a Girl"** by **Prabal Gurung** (Viking, \$32.00). It's the story of one queer boy's childhood in India and Nepal, and the intolerance he experienced as a child, which caused him to dream of New York and the life he imagined there. As you can imagine, dreams and reality collided, but nonetheless Gurung stayed, persevered and eventually became an award-winning fashion designer, highly sought by fashion icons and lovers of haute couture. This is an inspiring tale that you shouldn't miss.

No Pride celebration is complete without a history book or two.

In **"Trans History: From Ancient Times to the Present Day"** by **Alex L. Combs & Andrew Eakett** (\$24.99, Candlewick Press), you'll see that being trans is something that's as old as humanity. One nice part about this book: It's in graphic novel form, so it's lighter to read but still informative. Lastly, try **"So Many Stars: An Oral History of Trans, Nonbinary, Genderqueer, and Two-Spirit People of Color"** by **Caro De**

**Robertis** (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, \$32.00) a collection of thoughts, observations and truths from over a dozen people who share their stories. As an "oral history," you'll be glad to know that each page is full of mini-segments you can dip into anywhere, read from cover to cover, double-back and read again. It's that kind of book.

And if these six books aren't enough, if they don't quite fit what you crave now, be sure to ask your favorite book-seller or librarian for help. There are literally tens of thousands of books that are perfect for Pride Month and beyond. They'll be able to determine what you're looking for, and they'll put it directly in your hands. So stand up. March. And then sit and read. ::



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# Not just another Pride 2025 playlist

QMusic



by Gregg Shapiro  
Contributing Writer

Florida is a sizable state. Large enough to have its own distinctive weather systems. The climates in Miami Beach and the Keys, for instance, differ greatly from those of landlocked Orlando or Tallahassee in the northern center of the Panhandle. Florida is also expansive enough to have multiple music systems. Chances are that the electronic dance music or Latin rhythms heard in South Florida clubs wouldn't have much in common with the country tunes popular north and west of Palm Beach County.

This is all to say that the queer emotwang of the double LP green vinyl 45 RPM "Hunting Season" (Wax Bodega), the third by Palm Coast-based **Home Is Where**, seems to be a geographical fit. If you recall,



Home is Where

Gainesville was the hometown of emo legends Against Me!, led by trans musician Laura Jane Grace. Somewhat similarly, half of Home Is Where's band members, including lead vocalist Bea MacDonald, and her songwriting partner Tilley Komorny, are both trans. "Hunting Season" gets off to an energetic emo start with "Reptile House" and "Migration Patterns," but by the end of "Artificial Grass" a sonic shift begins to occur, and the country vibe kicks in, boots and all, on "Black Metal Mormon." Memorable songs also worth mentioning are "Stand-Up Special," "Everyone Won the Lotto," "Milk & Diesel" and "Roll Tide."

<https://homeiswhere.bandcamp.com/album/hunting-season>

After addressing the possibility of becoming a known quantity on 2022's "Household Name" album, **Momma** writes in the liner notes for their new album, "Welcome to My Blue Sky" (Polyvinyl), that it's "an open letter to those who have come in and out of our lives, our friends and lovers, our ex-friends and ex-lovers, who have all had a hand in creating this hurricane with us." A modern rock quartet co-founded by Allegra Weingarten and openly queer Etta Friedman, Momma could easily become household names on the strength of "Ohio All The Time," a song that's getting consistent airplay on college and satellite radio stations. Momma's as



Momma

comfortable blazing and blistering ("Last Kiss," "Rodeo"), as they are slowing the pace ("Take Me With You," "Sincerely"), and even dabbling in electronics ("Bottle Blonde" and "New Friend"). <https://www.mommaband.com/>

On pure white vinyl, "In The Key of Love" (Facet/Warner) is the long-awaited full-length debut LP by queer singer/songwriter **Jake Wesley Rogers**. Chosen by Cyndi Lauper to join her on the summer 2025 leg of her farewell tour, it's a fitting pairing because it sounds like Rogers' "In The Key of Love" attempts to contain and package his energy in the same way that Lauper's "She's So Unusual" did for

her. While some listeners may be put off by Rogers' spiritual presentation, you have to admire the way he never shies away from his queerness, as if it is its own form of sacred expression. This is exemplified in the title tune, "My Misery," "Hot Gospel," "God Bless," "Mother, Mary, and Me," and "Happy Accident." <https://www.jakewesleyrogers.com/>

"Shapes" (Righteous Babe) is the debut album by non-binary avant/folk (their words) singer-songwriter **Wryn**. The nine songs sound like a personal invitation to observe a transformative journey. "Steady," for example, opens with Wryn asking "What do you see when you're looking at me?" and then goes on to declare that "tender" in their heart and skin, they are steady and ready for what comes next. After echoing Whitman in "Multitudes," Wryn prepares to "let go" of what holds them back in "Only Thing," and embraces who they've become in the title song. <https://wryn.com/>

Who a singer/songwriter chooses to cover on their debut album says a lot about them. On their debut album,



Jake Wesley Rogers

"Back to Back" (reidparsons.com), non-binary artist **Reid Parsons**, performs a respectful and respectable cover of Bruce Springsteen's "I'm on Fire," which does The Boss proud. Regarding Parsons' own



Reid Parsons

songs, sung in a vocal style reminiscent of Ani DiFranco, they have a natural inclination for crafting compositions that are soulful ("Get Out of Bed" and "Holiday"), have a jazzy twang ("Lightbulb") or a funky beat ("Show Me You Love Me"), or are straightforward country ("Same Old Shit"). <https://reidparsons.com/> ::




Wryn

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