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Press Releases:

HRC Takes Action Against Saks Fifth Avenue for Undermining LGBT Equality

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In response to outrageous anti-equality position and undermining their own corporate LGBT equality policies, HRC suspends Saks' Corporate Equality Index score

WASHINGTON - Today, the Human Rights Campaign, (HRC), the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization, took the rare step of suspending Saks Fifth Avenue's Corporate Equality Index (CEI) score. The action was taken following Saks' claims in response to a lawsuit that Title VII protections don't apply to transgender employees and that the company is not legally bound by its own LGBT equality policies. While HRC honors the right of the company to vigorously defend itself against allegations of misconduct, the arguments made in Saks' court filings go well beyond arguing the veracity of the allegations.

Leyth Jamal, a transgender former employee of Saks, filed an employment discrimination lawsuit under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 alleging discrimination and harassment/hostile work environment based on her gender identity. In a motion to dismiss the case and in stark contrast to clearly established positions of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Saks astoundingly

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gender identity. The decision makes clear that transgender people across the country who have experienced workplace discrimination can file a claim with the EEOC under existing federal sex discrimination law. Likewise, in December of 2014, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder [announced](#) the U.S. Department of Justice will recognize transgender discrimination as sex discrimination. Additionally, in its response to the HRC CEI survey, the company chronicles its employee protections and benefits in its employee handbook.

“Saks’ arguments are hugely concerning to us,” said Deena Fidas, Director of HRC’s Workplace Equality Program. “In its court filings, Saks attempts to secure a motion to dismiss Ms. Jamal’s allegations by simultaneously calling into question the validity of its own non-discrimination policy and the larger, crucial protections afforded by Title VII. The policies our CEI advances are not window dressings for any company to prop up or disregard in the face of individual allegations of misconduct. Saks is publicly undercutting the applicability of its own policies reported in the CEI and we must suspend Saks’ CEI score until further notice.”

HRC has contacted Saks and has asked them to clarify these two issues and amend their legal filings.

The Human Rights Campaign is America’s largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. HRC envisions a world where LGBT people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community.

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