

SPORTS

Equinox, SoulCycle respond to calls for boycott

August 8, 2019



Equinox's Powered by Pride campaign. Image credit: Equinox

By STAFF REPORTS

Upscale fitness brands Equinox and SoulCycle are distancing themselves from their investor's planned fundraiser for President Donald Trump amid consumer backlash.

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After news broke that billionaire Stephen Ross, who is the chairman of their parent company, would be hosting a lunch for the president at his Hamptons home this week, the gyms have been facing calls for boycotts. With a portfolio that extends beyond Equinox Group, Mr. Ross' presidential ties could have an impact on other brands' businesses.

Presidential protest

Mr. Ross is the chairman and founder of Related Companies, which is an investor in SoulCycle and Equinox and developed Hudson Yards.

The planned fundraiser is charging \$100,000 a head for tickets, which include lunch and a photo opportunity with the president. For \$250,000, attendees can have a meeting with Mr. Trump.

In response to the event, a petition has been signed by more than 3,000 people, who are demanding that Equinox and SoulCycle stop supporting Mr. Trump by canceling the fundraiser.

"Supporting this administration and the myriad of ways in which it undermines and endangers members of our communities is unacceptable and if this fundraiser indeed does take place we will be looking for another gym to give our money to and we will be calling on our networks of LGBTQ and POC friends to do the same," the petition reads.

Equinox has built its image on inclusivity. For Pride month this year, the gym launched a campaign in partnership with organization House Lives Matter, which works to promote wellness within the community of LGBTQ people of color.

Celebrities such as Chrissy Teigen and Billy Eichner have voiced their support for the boycott.

Consumers are also posting on social media that they have canceled memberships. Others are saying that they will avoid visiting Hudson Yards, the New York complex that includes a mall with high-end stores such as Neiman Marcus.



The first Equinox Hotel is opening in Manhattan. Image credit: Equinox

Along with its fitness facilities, Equinox opened a branded hotel at Hudson Yards earlier this year. An onsite 60,000-square-foot Equinox Fitness Club is the largest built to-date ([see story](#)).

Responding to the boycott, Equinox issued a statement.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Equinox (@equinox) on Aug 7, 2019 at 12:58pm PDT

Instagram post from Equinox

"Many members raised their concerns about a political fundraiser taking place later this week," Equinox Group wrote.

"We want you to know that Equinox and SoulCycle have nothing to do with the event and do not support it," it said. "As is consistent with our policies, no company profits are used to fund politicians. In fact, we are committed to all our members and the communities we live in."

"We believe in tolerance and equality, and will always stay true to those values. Mr. Ross is a passive investor and is not involved in the management of either business."

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