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FIVE PUBLISHERS JOIN HISTORIC LAWSUIT AGAINST THE STATE OF IOWA, CHALLENGING BOOK BANNING PROVISIONS OF SENATE FILE 496

PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE JOINED BY HACHETTE BOOK GROUP, HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS, MACMILLAN PUBLISHERS, SIMON & SCHUSTER, AND SOURCEBOOKS

(New York, April 15, 2024)—Five publishers join the lawsuit against the State of Iowa and the book-banning provisions of Senate File 496 (SF496), a historic challenge to protect the right to publish and read books. Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins Publishers, Macmillan Publishers, Simon & Schuster, and Sourcebooks will join Penguin Random House alongside the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA); four renowned authors whose books have been removed in Iowa school and classroom libraries—Laurie Halse Anderson (*Speak and Shout*), John Green (*Looking for Alaska* and *The Fault in Our Stars*), Malinda Lo (*Last Night at the Telegraph Club* and *A Scatter of Light*), and Jodi Picoult (*Nineteen Minutes*); three educators; and a high school student.

Shortly after the lawsuit was [filed](#), U.S. District Court Judge Stephen Locher [blocked the state from enforcing the law](#). The injunction marked an early victory for the plaintiffs and came just days before penalties for violating the law—which targets librarians, educators, and school districts—were set to go into effect.

In response to Iowa's appeal, the plaintiffs [filed a brief](#) in the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in opposition to the state's efforts to overturn the preliminary injunction. The core argument presented in the plaintiffs' brief is that the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment protects the right of students to read and authors to be read in school and classroom libraries.

Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins Publishers, Macmillan Publishers, Simon & Schuster and Sourcebooks issued a joint statement: "We as publishers are uniting in our unwavering commitment to stand with educators, librarians, students, authors, and readers against the unconstitutional censorship measures being imposed by the state of Iowa. The alarming rise of book bans across the country demands our collective action. Now, more than ever, we must stand firmly with our authors and readers to defend the fundamental right to read and the freedom of expression."

About Iowa Senate File 496

SF 496 was enacted in May 2023 and prohibits books containing any description or depiction of a "sex act"—regardless of context—from Iowa school and classroom libraries, covering students all the way through twelfth grade. SF 496 also prohibits books relating in any way to gender identity or sexual orientation from school and classroom libraries for students through sixth grade. Both provisions encompass fiction and non-fiction alike. Books that were removed from libraries as a result of SF 496 included widely beloved and celebrated titles such as: *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison; *Song of Solomon*, by Toni Morrison; *The Bluest Eye*, by Toni Morrison; *Ulysses*, by James Joyce; *As I Lay Dying*, by William Faulkner; *Forever. . .*, by Judy Blume; *Push: A Novel*, by Sapphire; *The Handmaid's Tale*, by Margaret Atwood; *1984*, by George Orwell; *Brave New World*, by Aldous Huxley, and *Native Son* by Richard Wright.

The plaintiffs are represented in the lawsuit by ArentFox Schiff LLP and Weinhardt Law.

Penguin Random House first filed the lawsuit against Iowa on November 30, 2023, and is also a plaintiff in a lawsuit filed with PEN America in Escambia County School District and School Board (FL) over unconstitutional book bans.

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