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## **MAJOR PUBLISHERS AND THE AUTHORS GUILD FILE RENEWED CHALLENGE AGAINST THE STATE OF IOWA, FOR BOOK REMOVAL PROVISION IN SENATE FILE 496**

**This complaint follows a federal court of appeals ruling that the First Amendment applies in school libraries**

(New York, September 26, 2024)— Penguin Random House, Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins Publishers, Macmillan Publishers, and Simon & Schuster, alongside The Authors Guild, filed a renewed challenge today to the book removal provision in Iowa Senate File 496. This is one of two lawsuits that the coalition has brought challenging school library book removal mandates. On August 29, the group, along with Sourcebooks, [filed a lawsuit](#) against the state of Florida challenging the unconstitutional book removal provision in Florida House Bill 1069.

Also joining in this challenge are the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA) and 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*). Additionally, this complaint includes new plaintiffs: two educators and a high school student.

While the State of Iowa initially defended the ban by arguing that the First Amendment does not apply to school libraries, this argument—known as the “government speech doctrine”—was squarely rejected by the 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit Federal Court of Appeals prior to this filing.

When SF 496 was first enacted in May 2023, school districts interpreted it to prohibit books that relate in any way to gender identity or sexual orientation from school and classroom libraries for students through sixth grade. As a result of the lawsuit, the state has acknowledged that SF 496 does not require such restrictions. Accordingly, the lawsuit now focuses exclusively on the prohibition against any books containing sexual content, regardless of the value of the book or the age of a student.

Penguin Random House, Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins Publishers, Macmillan Publishers, Simon & Schuster, Sourcebooks and the Authors Guild issued a joint statement: “We must continue to stand together—alongside educators, librarians, students, authors, and readers—to protect the freedom to read and fight against the unconstitutional censorship measures being imposed by the state of Iowa. We will do everything we can to strike down SF 496’s remaining book ban provision and defend the fundamental rights of Iowans to read, think, and learn freely.”

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