

July 9, 2020

Director Anne Precythe
Missouri Department of Corrections
2729 Plaza Drive
P.O. Box 236
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Director Precythe,

The undersigned organizationsⁱ representing all parts of the book community, including the First Amendment right to write, publish, and distribute, are writing in response to a letter the American Booksellers for Free Expression (ABFE) recently received from an inmate housed in the Missouri Department of Corrections asking for assistance.

The American Booksellers for Free Expression (ABFE) is a division of the American Booksellers Association, the national trade association for independent bookstores founded in 1900. ABA has members across the U.S., including in Missouri. ABFE's mission is to defend the First Amendment and the free exchange of ideas, particularly those contained in books.

According to the inmate's letter, he wants to write a book, but has been told by prison officials that his First Amendment rights have been forfeited and that Missouri has a longstanding book publishing prohibition. The inmate says prison officials have told him that "they'll throw [him] into the hole" if he writes a book and gets it published, even if the book has nothing to do with the crime he is convicted of.

We are concerned about the inmate's claim in his letter and are requesting any further information you can provide on the below points.

- Since the inmate says this is a longstanding policy, can you provide us with a copy of this policy if such a policy exists?
- Is there any other pertinent information about the policy that may or may not have been applied?
- Can you provide information about the process for seeking permission to write and publish a book in Missouri prisons?
- Is there an appeal process in place?

Thank you in advance for your time. Please feel free to contact molly@bookweb.org for additional information.

Sincerely,

American Booksellers for Free Expression
Association of American Publishers
Authors Guild
Freedom to Read Foundation

ⁱ Authors Guild, Inc. is the nation's oldest and largest professional organization for all writers with approximately 10,000 members, including writers of all forms of nonfiction and fiction. The Authors Guild promotes the rights and professional interest of authors in various areas, including freedom of expression and copyright.

The Association of American Publishers (AAP) represents the leading book, journal, and education publishers in the United States on matters of law and policy, advocating for outcomes that incentivize the publication of creative expression, professional content, and learning solutions. AAP represents an industry whose very existence depends on the free exercise of rights guaranteed by the First Amendment.

The Freedom to Read Foundation is an organization established to promote and defend First Amendment rights, foster libraries as institutions that fulfill the promise of the First Amendment, support the right of libraries to include in their collections and make available to the public any work they may legally acquire, and establish legal precedent for the freedom to read of all persons.