

Amistad Law Project

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://amistadlaw.org/past-campaign-overturning-book-ban-pa-prisons>

Campaign and Advocacy

In 2018, the Department of Corrections locked down every state prison for 12 days in response to an alleged increase of drugs in the prison system. In the wake of this lockdown, the DOC brought about a host of punitive policies. Among those policies, was a ban of books to prisoners programs and also a ban on family members sending books to their loved ones from publishers and booksellers. The DOC planned to establish a marketplace so incarcerated people could buy books solely through them.

This policy would have allowed the DOC to limit what incarcerated people have access to read. It amounted to intolerable censorship and a monopoly marketplace. Amistad Law Project launched a petition, hosted call-in days and, with our movement allies, we spoke out in the press and the public square. Within a matter of months, we and others in the movement prevailed in getting the DOC to rescind this policy. Today, family members are still able to send books to their loved ones from online booksellers. Programs such as Philadelphia's Books Through Bars and Pittsburgh's Book 'Em continue to provide incarcerated people with free access to books.

