

January 12, 2018

NYC Books Through Bars cautiously welcomes the news that the Governor's Office has ordered DOCCS to suspend the pilot package ban under Directive 4911A. We hope that this situation has brought attention to the plight of the tens of thousands of incarcerated New Yorkers who live every day without access to meaningful literature, fresh food, warm clothing, and their families. Not only have New York State and DOCCS systematically failed to meet these needs, but Directive 4911A was cruel in that it furthered the deprivation of those in its custody.

While we do our best to match books to individuals behind bars, we know that the state could provide much more programming to meet the educational and reading needs of the people it incarcerates. We are outraged at the ongoing restrictions at so-called "TV Facilities" in New York State (such as Attica and Five Points) that prevent people who are incarcerated there from receiving packages on a regular basis. We condemn the fact that the thousands of individuals in solitary confinement are still unable to access prison libraries. We condemn efforts to limit visitation for family members, who often have to travel long distances at huge personal expense to see their loved ones. We condemn the perpetuation, much less the expansion, of the for-profit prison industry, which exploits the criminal justice system for its own gains.

We are grateful for the support of allied organizations and all the individuals who have worked to draw attention to this issue. We remain vigilant to call out and oppose any forthcoming directive that does not recognize the indigent circumstances or real needs of the over 50,000 people who are incarcerated in New York State.

— NYC Books Through Bars Collective