



RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO CHARGING PRISONERS TO READ

Whereas, the Prisoners' Right to Read: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights declares that "equitable access to information should be provided for people with disabilities" and "The denial of intellectual freedom—the right to read, to write, and to think—diminishes the human spirit of those segregated from society";

Whereas, the Access to Library Resources and Services document articulates the importance of providing access to resources to every member of the community, particularly in light of existing socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and other inequities, many of which are exacerbated by the penal system;

Whereas, people in West Virginia prisons will be charged 3-5 cents/minute to access "free" books on e-readers following similar for-profit programs that exist in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and other states;

Whereas, these per-minute charges are particularly unfair to imprisoned people who are emergent readers or who have print disabilities like dyslexia or low vision;

Whereas, these charges mean that the average cost of reading a single "free" book such as *1984* is close to \$20, while imprisoned people's wages, if any are paid, are less than \$1 per day; and

Whereas, these for-profit programs are provided access to prison space and resources, which could instead be used for libraries and the free services they provide, including services that promote increased access to higher education programs, which have been proven to help reduce recidivism, *now therefore be it*



Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members:

1. Condemns the existence of for-profit programs that charge incarcerated people for access to reading material, acknowledging such programs only serve to deepen existing inequities barring free access to information for all people.
2. Strongly encourages all library workers, particularly those in states with for-profit prison reading programs, to contact their state legislatures to express their concern over the denial of access to information these programs pose to incarcerated people.

Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association
Monday, January 27, 2020, in Philadelphia, PA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary W. Ghikas".

Mary W. Ghikas, Executive Director and
Secretary of the ALA Council