Hello. My name is Holly.

I am 37 years old and was always told that if I worked hard enough that I could be anything that I wanted to be. I knew that I wanted to be an illustrator since I was a little girl. So, that is the path I chose. I went to school to study art and have an A.A.S. In graphic design.

I am troubled by all the things I find on the web about the “Orphaned Art” proposal.
I have worked very hard my entire life to develop the skills to be a professional artist. I am just beginning to see it all pay off. I have been posting my work on the web for years in order to have a following and gain exposure.

At this time, neither I nor my peers can afford to register works with the copyright office. I am afraid that if I do not register, my work will be up for grabs if this indeed passes, but I do not have the funds to register each piece. I have felt some protection until now. I have been able to create works and watermark with a copyright symbol, knowing that a thief would have to remove such marks and the metadata would prove ownership.

I feel very unsure of my future as I hear more about changes in copyright law. I make very little as an artist, and what I make goes back into my chosen profession. To register everything would cost me hundreds, even thousands. At this point, like many other artists, I am just trying to make ends meet.
I am just beginning to see my work become a success. I was published in a worldwide project last year, will be again this year, received my first royalties for a coloring book my art is in, and I am currently illustrating my first book under contract. I also teach casual painting classes at a local business, who might also be affected by this.

The very basis of my living depends on my work being copyrighted by me. My art is my inventory, for me to sell or use. I have followed the law of my work being owned by me. Reproduction rights belong to me. Now that will change and if I do not have money to register everything and I could potentially lose it all?

I feel I reserve the right to decide who gets to license my work and who doesn't. I feel if a work is floating around on the internet, it may be legally stolen if this “orphaned works” passes.

This would affect my ability to create my work and share it with the world. Creating art and advertising costs time and money. I cannot imagine trying to figure out how to come up with the funds to register everything I have ever created. I have already spent so much time, money, and energy trying to make it when the copyright automatically belonged to me. I can only think that I would have to quit if registering my art was the only way to not have my work stolen from me.

I don't have much, but what I have I have worked for, took chances for. I cannot imagine what I would do if I were faced with having to give up my dream, because I had to pay to not have my art taken from me.

I also worry how this would affect families who might share their photos online. Would they be up for grabs, too?

I feel very strongly about artists having the rights to their own work. About using written contracts as the only means to allow licensing of that work. If the owner of a work cannot be found, find another

work. Based on the awful ethics of a business that I used to work for, I can imagine all kinds of money- hungry people stealing work and claiming that they looked for the artist just so they can use it without paying licensing fees, which are so minuscule that even someone like me could probably afford the 5-10% of a merchandise sale to use it.

I cannot handle the burden of my life as an artist being made even more difficult. I am actually worried about how I will put gas in my car. How I will pay all my bills. And now I keep thinking, just as I am seeing the first fruits of my labor, I will have to regroup at 37 years old over a proposed law that makes no sense for artists who work for themselves.

Please support self-promoting, self-employed artists.

Thank you for reading my statement.

-Holly Broxson