I write because I oppose the new US Copyright Act. I am not a visual artist (I am an amateur musician), but I am close to several visual artists, some of whom profit off their work. It is important to them, and artists as a whole, that this act does not pass.

This reform is being called for by corporate interests who want to supply the public with artists' works - likely profiting off them in the process. The Orphan Works Act will guarantee these registries will have access to works, either through registration (in effect, surrendering the artists' rights to the work) or swallowing up unregistered works and copyrighting them themselves, claiming these "derivative works". This is without any compensation for the artists themselves.

If a work is unregistered, it can be exploited by anyone without the artist's knowledge or consent. If a work is registered, it can be exploited by the registry and the general public, likely without compensation. This leaves no room for the artist to back out, and in effect ensues it will be exploited by someone else. The public may want to be able to use artists' works. However, many artists are generous enough to allow this anyways. The public, including the artist community of the US, have not been calling for these reforms. Instead, commercial registries have been doing so. This is in the interest of a few corporations - not artists, and not the general population of the United States.

Art does not lose its value upon publication. It remains important to the artist and their business model. Many artists, including some of my friends, are unemployed or in a difficult financial situation. Art is their primary or only source of income. If these acts pass, they would lose exclusive rights to their work, and anyone else can use or exploit it without the artist's consent. This is when the art loses its value. Artists would lose their main source of income. This would in effect be like stealing the money that artists deserve. It is important to their business model that they keep exclusive rights to their work. Even if an artist does not profit off their work, someone else can - either by surrendering it to a registry or if the work becomes orphaned, in which case it would be without the original artist's knowledge or consent. Artists, be they professional or hobbyists, would not welcome this. Would you?

Artists should have rights to their works, and they should have a right to use, license, and profit off their works however they see fit. They should not be forced to have commercial interests own or profit off them. Artists are not simply workers who produce art to be harvested and exploited by commercial interests or infringers without compensation. An artist's work is an artist's work, and they should keep exclusive control over them.