Dear Copyright Office;

I have recently heard about proposals for a new copyright law that would undermine the hard work and effort of freelance and professional artists alike. As someone who is just breaking into the freelance sector, I am greatly concerned by the direction the copyright law is going. Though my experience is limited in comparison to other veterans, I recognize how detrimental this is to my chosen career.

I will try to answer some of the questions you have proposed to the best of my ability in the hopes that you will see just how misguided this law is.

1) What are the most significant challenges related to monetizing and/or licensing photographs/ graphic artworks, and/or illustrations?

One of the biggest challenges I have already seen in trying to sell my works involve is preventing other people from using it without my permission---without paying. They didn't commission me for the work, they didn't buy the print--they just yank it, then upload and sell it themselves. I have even seen big companies do this to well known professional artists: taking the works and using them for commerical purposes, and giving the artist nothing for the time and effort (not even a credit). This is like walking into a store, taking someone's product, walking out and then selling it on the street corner. Are you going to start allowing people to just take from the shelves of stores whatever they want and sell as they wish? Without paying for it? Of course not--so why would you do that to artists?

2) What are the most significant enforcement challenges for photographers, graphic artists, and/or illustrators?

As it stands, many artists struggle with finding justice for people who already break the law and monetize works that are not their own. Lawyer fees are high, support is low, and if a creator of a work doesn't register the works--they get even less. Which makes no sense. The person who makes it makes it, and they generally have enough proof of it as well. Just because you can see it doesn't mean it is yours to take--see above. There are no words to express the feeling of knowing that Congress is thinking of making it okay to steal the hard work of others.

3) What are the most significant registration challenges for photographers, graphic artists, and/or illustrators?

An artist can make hundreds of drawings and sketches in a month, especially someone who is working full time. Each piece is usually put up for sale as soon as it is ready. Registering every work the artist does takes away time from actual work because of the steps involved in registering a process that they technically already own anyway. It isn't a patent, an invention. This is a work of art, a visual display of skill and knowledge. There isn't going to a be a mass market of the product on a factory line. It is one person with a brush or pen tablet in hand and a canvas of some kind. At this point, as a person working under the current law, I cannot fathom how much time and money it would cost to register all the works I have and will make. It seems like ridiculous, unnecessary paperwork. Artists are not skimping on their taxes--they pay as they should. That should be enough.

4. What are the most significant challenges or frustrations for those who wish to make legal use of photographs, graphic art works, and/or illustrations?

The only free-to-use stuff I have used has been as a reference for a difficult pose (such as an arm at an odd angle) or inspiration. Some art works I use as study aids to help me advance my craft but never for monetary gain of any kind. Students study the masters and people of a higher level so that they can improve, much like the textbooks professional doctors or teachers use to get good at their craft. The actual sellable products are from our own minds and creativity.

Outside of work, I love to point people to my favorite artists so that they can see and maybe even buy the works. I always credit and link back to the owner of the artwork. Sometimes I talk about why I like it, too.

5. What other issues or challenges should the Office be aware of regarding photographs, graphic artworks, and/or illustrations under the Copyright Act?

The current copyright is a far better model to work with than what you are currently considering. There are tweaks and fixes that need to be addressed, but it works well and guarantees the rights of the individual and worker. Enforcement needs to be easier to attain. If someone can prove ownership of a work, they need more support

and more ability to punish those who would steal their works and livelihood. The illustrators, photographers, and other creative fields should never be undermined or dismissed--they are an integral part of the market. Despite this fact, they have to fight tooth and nail for the rights and privileges traditional jobs enjoy--including the right to be paid for the work they do. This should not be. A job is a job, and when someone does that job, they should be paid accordingly. They should not be punished for maintaining their right to their own property. The thieves that would try to steal their property should be the ones punished.

6. What are the most significant challenges artists would face if these new copyright proposals become law?

It is hard to predict the future, but some things are certain. An artist would struggle even more to make a living. They would be lucky to be paid at all for the work they do. Most likely, such measures as proposed by Congress would kill the art industry and thus any kinds of illustrations for marketing, games, or whatever would drop in quality or completely disappear. Who wants to be a slave and not get paid for the work they do? Only bad things await such measures, for the artist and for the companies that need those artists.

I hope you understand that the steps you are proposing merely destroy what is good and working. There is no need for a change like this. For Congress to approve and support this claim is going against the rights of the individual and the worker. This cannot be, for the purpose of Congress is to protect those rights.

Sincerely,
Michelle