Dear Copyright Office:

I am writing to you as a professional glass artist from Wisconsin, since the new copyright law currently considered by the U.S. Congress, if enacted, would have a negative impact on the business of illustrators, photographers, fine artists and visual artists from all fields worldwide.

As a fulltime artist for the last 17 years, I have relied on acquiring new customers by presenting my work on the internet. I show in galleries and exhibitions throughout the world and am proud of the inherent copyright I hold as the creator of my work. (http://www.mosaicwench.com).

It is not always easy for me and other artists to negotiate fees that allow us to make a living from our work, or to enforce copyright protection of our work. However, current legislation in most countries around the world enables us to prove ownership of our work through the simple act of publishing it under our name.

Even so, while the the internet has afforded artists the ability to reach new audiences across the planet, it has also served as one of the greatest impediments for an artist's livelihood. Digitization has allowed for an artist's work to be exponentially shared and therefore almost impossible to exert complete control over how it is used. Most of the time our images are utilized simply as decoration on social media sites. But just as often our names and copyright information are unlawfully removed, rendering our images particularly vulnerable to orphaning and thus appropriation

Right now, the burden of proof is on the infringer who must prove that they have rights of use to an image if accused of copyright infringement. But this new proposed legislation would transfer the burden of proof onto the creator, who is now required to document proper registration of their work if infringed upon; something that almost every creator in United States has never done, and might not learn to do until it is too late – a tremendous pressure to prove something that is already a matter of course.

If my work can be assumed "orphaned" from the moment of creation, I can no longer give a client a guarantee that they have the exclusive rights of use to it. Copyright law is not an abstract legal issue, but the basis on which our business rests. Everything that we create, whether for a client, a show, or a gallery, becomes part of our business inventory. In the digital era, inventory is more valuable to artists than ever before.

The proposed copyright reform would result not only in artists losing their livelihood, but also in much fewer visual art being shared publicly by its creators for fear of infringement, which in the long run would mean less images being published; and thus diminishing variety and quality of our visual culture.

Please reconsider how a future law based on the 2015 Orphan Works and Mass Digitization Report could have potentially disastrous effects on not only the artists who create it,, but on the future creation of quality art in the public realm.

Sincerely,

Pat Mitchell

Menomonee Falls, WI, USA