To Whom it May Concern,

I am a fine artist and illustrator and I make my living by selling original works of art along with licensing and selling reproductions of my work. Art is not a hobby for me. I do not just do it for fun, I do it for profit. It is my livelihood and I do not take this subject lightly. Retaining ownership over my work is critical to my being able to put food on the table and pay my bills. Not to mention the fact that if someone else were to use it without permission then that would be blatant theft. It's actually taking money out of my pocket. It's not always easy to make a living as an artist but allowing someone else to take the credit for my work is definitely not going to help.

If I create a painting or an illustration then I need control over where and how it is used. I'm a wildlife artist and my work leans towards whimsy and fantasy. I create work with the intent of reminding people not only how precious the world we live in is but also of how they felt when they were young and in awe of the wonders in this world. That's what I strive for, it's not just a "thing" that can be bought, sold, used up and thrown away. So when there is the potential for a person to steal my work and use it in ways other than I would approve, that makes me quite angry. Not only from the theft but what if they start using it in their advertising? What if it's for a product or service that I would never be okay with? The fact of the matter is that we artists have every right under the sun to retain SOLE OWNERSHIP over our creations. There is no reason for someone else to be able to legally steal that work. The fact that you are even considering this option is appalling.

The Orphan Works and Mass Digitization Act seems to say well if you found it online then you may as well take the rights to it too. That's just lazy. We artists are not hard to find and if you do find a work and cannot find the owner then here's what you do, hire an artist to create a new piece of work for you! Or if you need a photograph then hire a photographer! Novel idea I know but I'm sure that these companies have the money to do so. Stop allowing theft from the wonderfully creative people in this society. You may not realize it but we do so much for the world. Without us everything would be black print on a white background. Generic.

So I ask you to appreciate what we do. Appreciate the photos that we take, the paintings that we create, the stories that we write and don't steal them from us. If you want to keep watching movies and tv shows, to have your children read their story books, to play video games, to enjoy creativity then you will vote a resounding NO on this bill. Instead, make it more difficult for people to steal. Respect the art! It doesn't come easily and it sure as heck is not free. It takes years upon years to become a good artist. We pay for college, we work on our craft every single day. To allow someone else to reap what we've sown is just plain wrong.

Sincerely,

Corina St. Martin