July 22nd, 2015

Maria Pallante
Register of Copyrights
U.S. Copyright Office
101 Independence Ave. S.E.
Washington, DC 20559-6000

RE: Notice of Inquiry, Copyright Office, Library of Congress
Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works (Docket No. 2015-01)

Dear Ms. Pallante,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my input on the subject of the recent copyright reform proposal.

I am writing to you as a visual art student and freelance illustrator. I am not well known nor do I have an established following, but I have grown up surrounded by successful artists who have fostered my creative abilities. I am concerned with preserving their rights, business, and creative integrity from exploitation. These proposed copyright reforms are a detriment, allowing these changes would benefit everyone except artists. It is imperative to understand that these changes to copyright laws will further abuse artists in a society that already undervalues them. It is heinous to think that something we create trumps our autonomy as creators. As it stands, I refuse to allow someone to use my existing work without my knowledge or consent. Artists should decide what we do with our content and determine how our work is used and who uses it.

I would like to address some issues I am concerned with regarding this proposed change:

With the proposed reforms, this new copyright system would overtake the current one in place changing the copyright laws, as we know it. As a student, I cannot afford to have all my works copyrighted. I have to learn to make a living from my work. I am in a massive amount of debt. This makes me virtually powerless and under this new system. . It is problematic that I, and many others, would have to register every single piece of work they ever created, including metadata, in order to maintain creative rights. Trying to put together thousands of pieces for copyright is not only time consuming, and exhaustive,

but expensive and hurts our businesses. It's classist and unjust. We need to keep our current copyright system so artists can continue to support themselves, their families, and careers. There are also several other problems associated with being unable to copyright every single piece of work. In this new system, if I am unable to copyright my own work, what is to stop someone else from copyrighting it first? I would have no way of knowing if my work had been copyrighted or published before I even had the chance to. How would I be able to prove it was mine if stolen? Anyone would be able to use my work freely because all unregistered work would be considered "orphaned," and this hurts my reputation. In other ways, my work could be associated with hate groups or companies against my own beliefs, and if I were to sue for compensation it would be virtually impossible: I would not have the money to cover court costs and legal fees, the small courts would be flooded with infringement cases, and I would likely lose the suit.

As it is, there have been countless times my colleagues have had their work stolen, altered, or reposted without any mention of them as the original artist from major corporations such as Urban Outfitters, PosterWorks, and a handful of others. Under this proposal, infringement would be nearly impossible to stop unlike it is now because we are protected. The Orphan Works bill only requires a "reasonably diligent search" for an artist and their work, but what constitutes a diligent search? What is to stop others from fraudulently claiming their search as diligent? Artists would not receive compensation nor would anyone have to ask for our consent. Under the proposal, others are free to alter, remove, and adjust work as they see fit, claiming them as "derivative work." There would also be no way to prove the infringer were the ones altered the pieces. It is only self-serving to those who repeatedly abuse and exploit artists for their own financial gain. Ultimately, it is a burden on the creator.

Now, I understand in some cases that it is difficult to find the original artist/art. It may be frustrating to those who want to make legal uses of work, but in the digital age there are nearly enough relevant resources to find what you are looking for, and in the event there is not it is not difficult to find an alternative. I am vehemently against sacrificing everything I have worked so someone else can benefit from my own blood, sweat, and

tears. If I want to profit from my own work, I should be able to do it on my own terms and keep full creative autonomy. Changing the copyright laws benefit everyone except the artist. The current copyright system ensures that others and I are protected from harm so we can maintain a standard of living and support our careers.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Abigail Palma