Hello,

I am a freelance artist with a BA in Visual Arts and an Associates in Commercial Art. I have been a freelance artist for over a decade, working as a painter and as an illustrator for books and graphic novels and more recently as a concept artist. I advertise my services exclusively online through my website as well as numerous online communities including DeviantArt.com, Facebook, LinkedIn, and ConceptArt.org. I upload my artwork on these sites both to promote my work and to refer potential employers, as my portfolio plays an even more important part than my resume when being considered for a job.

If copyright law was to change, then I would have to either stop advertising for work or register everything I wish to include in my online portfolios for fear of having my work potentially stolen by anyone who so much as lays eyes on it. Registering individual pieces at a fee of $35 each is an expense that many artists - particularly those just starting out - absolutely do not need. For years now the bidding wars for an artist has become a race to the bottom: It has become an expectation that artists work for very little or nothing at all in exchange for the oft-touted "exposure". Because of this, for many artists, licensing the images we create has become a primary means of income. If copyright law changes, then artists will essentially not only be working nearly for free but will also be losing what little money they're making from out of their pockets. Worse than that however, is the principle of essentially being forced to automatically relinquish ownership of everything we create. What we create belongs to us - we should decide who we share it with and how it should be used.

This proposed change in copyright law will not facilitate creativity or increase an exchange of ideas - it will inhibit them: new and struggling artists will register less of their work in an effort to save money, and in so doing will share less of their work online for fear of losing ownership and thus further income. I do not believe for a moment that "good faith" infringers do so only because they can't find the creator of the source material in question. This is the age of the internet - virtually any artist that has uploaded their work online can be contacted through multiple means and through multiple online accounts and personal websites. Search engines like Google Images and websites like Pinterest make it very easy to track down an artwork's creator. No, I believe that so called "good faith" infringers do so because they don't want to compensate an artist for their work when they feel they can get away with simply stealing it. I've seen it happen all too often. It is for this reason why now more than ever that artists need copyright law as it currently stands firmly on their side.

Please do not allow this proposed copyright act to pass.

Respectfully,

Andrea Trenbeath