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Dear US Copyright Office,

I am writing to express concern about the changes proposed to US Copyright laws, especially the "Orphaned Works" concept.

I am an artist. I recently graduated from Ringling College of Art and Design. I do not believe that any company has ever violated the copyright on any of my pieces. However, I do know that many of my friends, fellow Ringling classmates and alumni have had companies sell prints and posters of their work without permission. These companies are illegally profiting off of people. My friends dedicated years to learning their craft, and hours, if not days working on the pieces that were sold without their permission.

What these companies do is strictly illegal under current copyright law. When caught they are often shut down. However, under Orphaned Works, it would be much easier for a company to take advantage of artists. They could claim that they had put in an effort to find the artist, even if they never had. This is not just a ridiculous hypothetical situation that I propose; companies already do this, generating millions in revenue off of stolen artworks. With these new laws, it would just be easier for them.

Some of this revenue will doubtlessly be earned by taking the works of well-established successful artists. However, I believe that more of it will come from taking advantage of young people, students and recent college graduates who are not famous, but are working hard, and are trying to start off their careers. Companies will see the high-quality art that young people are producing, and will just take it. Orphaned Works are just another way that businesses are trying to take advantage of American workers.

Thank you for reading this. I hope that you keep what I said in mind.

-Benjamin Fox Stoddard