From the desk of Anders N. Zurhorst…

To whom it may concern;

Greetings. As time passes by the minute, more and more hard working artists are learning of a rather unsettling bill currently being drafted by Congress, at the questionable advice from the Copyright Office, regarding many nationally harmful changes to our current US Copyright Laws. The changes that Congress and the Copyright Office have outlined for this new bill already, are simply too devastating to the entirety of the United States society, morality, and economy to ignore. I, along with countless others, whom I'm sure many of which have already contacted you, strongly feel that those involved with and in favor of enacting these changes are simply forgetting and/or overlooking some of these obvious key factors and the immediate consequences of them when considering the overall effects of said changes. Your country strongly urges you to take a moment to reconsider, and we want to help you. If the relationship between the United States population and its government is to remain even relatively healthy, it is absolutely **vital** for each part to listen to the other if either believes the other is about to make such an immoral decision that will inevitably effect both parts.

Nothing our society suggests in situations like these is without reason and the same vice versa. *The brain cannot swim if the body cannot act, and the body cannot act if the brain does not know it's drowning.*

We ***have*** to listen to one another in order to keep our country afloat.

I'd like to point out several things, if I may, that need to be at the front of your minds whenever you even look at the bill you are drafting. The first and foremost, as it will affect every inch of the country, is the entertainment industry. No matter whom you may be, where you may be employed, what you may do with your life, what you believe in or what your interests are, if you reside anywhere within America, the entertainment industry affects your day to day life – consciously and subconsciously. Every single human being within our country is directly affected whenever anything changes within such an industry. But as unfortunate as it is, the vast majority of the citizens within this country strongly fear subtle change. Your changes however, are not that. They are not subtle. They are life-changing and will have devastating effects that will severely damage too many aspects to even list in a day. Your whole country will be incredibly, utterly compromised and weakened as a result, and evolving to cope with a change that huge won't happen any time soon. It would very likely surpass our lifespans and continue to effect the next many generations.

You may be asking where I'm going with this. "It's just entertainment. For fun," most might reply. But what *I'm* asking *you* is, if you aren't already, please look far beyond just that immediate reaction. Is it *just* for fun? Or can we all swallow our pride – as none of us loves that this is a fact of life – and admit that the entertainment industry carries most, if not all, other industries we have, in many ways. It carries our country, in this day and age. We indulge and

dedicate our lives to it. We spend billions on it year after year… Big screen TVs, video games, iphones, ipods, music, cameras, movies, books, computers, toys for the little ones, “more, more, MORE!” the people shout. Why do they do this? What on Earth could possibly make them want these things? How come we’re all so glued to our smartphones and tablets as they were attached to our circulatory systems and therefore could never be separated from us, as such a thing would cause our untimely deaths? Faces just buried in phones! My goodness, it’s so important to us that we’re even willing to kill ourselves because we’re too addicted to look at the road! My my my my my!!! You all know what I’m talking about. Everyone does! Oh dear. What could they possibly be staring at and poking and swiping and tapping and showing friends and family?

Why don’t we ask the entertainment industry? Let’s look at the average person’s smartphone. Tap all those pretty little graphics, those buttons on the screen, those unique little square and circular pictures that symbolize so much more to us and open up entire worlds we’ve grown to value more than the lives we’re walking around in and experiencing right in front of us this whole time. Who made those charming little buttons that open portals to new worlds? Artists. Who designed the layouts, graphics, coding, text styling, the buttons, the symbols, everything that makes it easy to understand and fun to poke and prod? Artists, my friends! Look further, at all those photos. All those videos. The art, the music, the poetry, the lyrics, the creativity, things that mean the world to their creators. Things you could never replicate without seeing them first. You infringe on our creativity.

You infringe on our imaginations.

You infringe on our minds.

How soon until we have to say goodbye to democracy and hello to communism, or dictatorship, or anything less than the value you set democracy at. You’re taking the democracy from your own people. You are breaking the trust of the ones who believe in and depend on you the most. We look to you for guidance, protection, morals, freedom, everything we hold dear, and you’re so ready to just rip that away from us, with almost no warning whatsoever, for no justifiable reason, as if you were punishing us all for nothing. By passing a bill such as this, you are beginning a downward spiral that will dive faster and faster until it’s too late to swim to the surface in time.

This just scratches the surface, my friends. This is not the true extent to which the entertainment industry drives this nation. And if it hasn’t become clear yet, I’ll put it plainly; While the entertainment industry drives our economy, it is none other than millions of **artists** who create and run the glue and face of every piece of entertainment our country’s industry has to offer. All corners of the industry included, even parts such as sports, news, and even politics. You need us too. On top of that, we provide labels, music, commercials, animations, every single tv show, every single movie, every single book, every single candy wrapper, right down to the catch phrases brands and commercials will use to get consumers to remember their products,

everything you see, hear, eat, touch, and experience in this nation, is given to you courtesy of the artists who make a living solely off of art. You may not think your bill will effect that, but unfortunately, your bill's passing will set off a long chain of events and reactions that will cause this economy to crumble under its own weight. Artists are people. Just like you and me. They aren't stupid. And even those undiscovered and unpublished yet, *even the kids just starting out with their newfound passion for art*, will all look at this change and hide their art from the world. No one appreciates their blood, sweat and tears being taken for granted, and that's what every single creative outlet requires from us. Art theft, even with the protection of the current copyright laws, is a massive problem already. It affects everyone and each time it happens to any one artist, an entire community of artists is compromised and trust me… We look out for each other. Hundreds of artists that never even speak to each other will drop everything to fight in a war against any known art thief until the offense is resolved. We care. And we fight for our rights, harder than any politician could understand. Social media networks will lose most of their patrons and users that use them to share art and videos and photos and songs that they've created and feel genuine *pride* for. As that crumbles, they lose profits, and artists that have been helping to create and run the networks, will back out as well. No artist wants what you are planning on allowing the world to do to them. We're not dense. We can see everything this bill will harm, that you yourselves cannot see. How many of you writing this bill are artists who make a living off of art?

Not one of you can say that. You're politicians just trying to make your workload as far as lawsuits go lighter. But what you don't see is that we are all gearing up for the most extreme influx of lawsuits against the effects this bill will bring about and your work load will become too much for any of you. That's where it puzzles me. You're not just hurting us, you're going to severely harm yourselves too, and it's concerning. Please try to reconsider. If I did not feel this concern, I would not have spent hours drafting and writing this letter that I'm honestly not even sure will ever be read by anyone. I really think you should reconsider, and I'm not the only one.

Take into consideration not only the groups of artists that drive the entertainment industry and give big businesses the tools they need to even be noticed by anyone, but also the individuals just barely scraping by, with nothing but their artwork to get them the very change they need to so much as eat each day. It is never easy for any artist to start out on their own. Take a walk through Grand Central Station, NY… There are so many scruffy, humble, young or even homeless musicians sitting on the sidelines, providing our lives some background music. It makes you feel at home. It gives you a warm feeling. It brings people together and makes them smile, it can brighten up peoples' day or relieve stress after a stressful days work. They aren't imposing. They aren't rude or mean. They're just doing their own thing, because it's who they are, and what they do best, and it gives them what is probably, for many, their only way to connect with people. You don't think about them as soon as you're out of earshot. You don't remember their faces. But go back there another day and it's likely they'll be there. Yes. They enjoy it. But ever see a hat or guitar case at their feet? They never tell you what it's for. Never. But you know. We all

do. That's why there's a small amount of money there. We take these people for granted. But for most of them, that money is their meal ticket for the day, or might be just enough to buy a windbreaker or help pay rent… They're sharing what they love the most with you because they need help. Desperately. If they had a big important job and were making money, they wouldn't be there playing music. They'd be at work.

It's not that simple. But they have a great gift and they're putting it to their best use until they become well known and can do more with it. That's all they can do to survive on their own. It's not like this for just musicians. Visual artists, countless visual artists, barely have enough to pay rent. They've moved out of the house. Don't go to college because they could never afford it and their parents might not have been able to for them either. They're 21 or 22. They look just like your children when they first move out. Their *only* income is the drawings they sell through commissioned work, custom merchandise they make, prints, etc. You will kill them by passing this bill, because who would want to spend money on an artwork they see online to make it a print or get it on a shirt, when they can download it for free and print it themselves, apply it to clothing and other merch themselves, it just won't help. These artists are called 'starving artists' for a reason. It's not a 'woe is me' title. It's a legitimate "I can barely afford food and have to draw to survive" statement. It's a reality for more and more young adults and even older adults as well. You will quite honestly kill them off. The government constantly promises to do something about the amount of starving children and homeless families in our nation. Is *increasing that amount* what you meant by 'doing something about it'? This isn't a letter to point fingers and make you read an entire essay. This is a letter asking for humanity, reconsideration, and a desperate cry for a little common sense and common decency. Please show your empathy for those who rely on you to protect them.

If you don't, you may see your nation lose more of its moral values and integrity than it already has in these recent days. People will be seeing 'Okay, I can steal anyone's art and say it's my own. AND make money off of it' and honestly, it's not a far walk between that thought and 'Well if the government stopped caring about that, why would they care about any other kind of theft?" There will no doubt be a massive rise in theft and looting crime rates. We will see riots form over these, as we have in the past two years. It's already painfully obvious that our nation is not afraid to burn things down, protest, throw all out riots, kill each other 'in the name of –whatever cause here-' and develop ravenous packs of looters and thieves. We already have enough rioting and crime. You know and very likely already *see* how quickly this bill draft has spread like wildfire throughout the nation and has caused monumental uproar that only continues to increase. Unfortunately, I fear it is only a matter of time before *that* turns to more senseless violence from riots and protests. It will happen, unfortunately. Artists are stronger and more protective of their creations than some people are over their own homes.

All of this doesn't have to happen though. You are the ones who can spell out that fate for us all. Will we take a dive into more violence and rioting? Or will we maintain the peace amongst the

number of artists that actually outnumbers the headcount of the government's employed officials in this country?

Once again, I strongly, *strongly* urge you to reconsider, and hope you will keep these factors in mind while you continue to contemplate such a devastating change to the nation. I thank you dearly for taking the time to read this lengthy letter. I normally never write to anyone, but this issue is much too important to ignore, and the consequences are almost as alarming as the bill's planned changes are hurtful and saddening.

Once again, thank you for giving me the chance to say my part, whether it makes any difference at all or not. Thank you.

From A. N. Zurhorst
Suffolk County, NY
7/20/15