To whom it may concern,

My name is Matthew G. Lewis and I'm a professional artist. I've been working as a professional artist for the last eight years having spent most of my professional hours as a freelancer. I've also held office jobs as a graphic designer, illustrator, and product designer. But, I moved away from the office environment in order to pursue freelance work from self-sought clients and to create my own content for sustaining myself.

Sharing work in digital and public spaces is a crucial way for independent/freelance artists, like myself, to showcase our work, ideas, and brands. These spaces (especially the internet) help us grow our audiences, share our talents, find new clients, and connect with more people who will enjoy our work. As it stands, the inherent copyright protection afforded by current law helps us to freely share our works with relative comfort knowing that, should our work be infringed upon, we have natural legal grounds to protect ourselves and our creations. Under the proposed Orphan Works bill, that natural protection is essentially circumvented by the need "register" our work with a private institution in order to protect our work from being infringed upon.

For low-income students, beginners, freelancers, independent artists, freelancers who depend on the freedom afforded by our natural copyright protections, having to register every single bit of creative content we generate before sharing it will be a mammoth financial impediment to fervently pursuing our craft. Only those with the economic means to register everything from the shortest of blog posts, to a sketch, a study, a lyric, a rhyme, a painting, a student short film, will be able to share, contribute, and grow their audience. The poor, struggling, just starting, and burgeoning artists will be disenfranchised to participate in the arts because of the financial barrier to assuring that their ideas and content are protected.

The Orphan Works legislation discourages freedom of expression, and stifles creativity by favoring those with economic means to protect their content. It favors those with economic means and gives them the advantage of consolidating creative output for their own purposes and giving them opportunity to steal ideas from those without tools to protect their ideas.

The internet is an incredibly fertile ground for the arts. Sharing freely with relatively little fear of having our work stolen encourages people to be productive, be involved, and be creative for their own and their neighbor's benefit. Please help to keep that freedom accessible by rejecting the Orphan Works legislation.

Thank you,

Matthew G. Lewis