July 20, 2015

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

Dear Ms. Pallante,

I am a current student at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, working to complete my masters in medical and biological illustration. It is a highly specialized field, requiring extensive medical and artistic knowledge and skill. The Johns Hopkins University provides one of only three accredited programs in the United States and getting to this point in my education has taken an extensive amount of time, energy, and effort over a number of years at a substantial financial cost.

After learning of the proposed changes to copyright legislation, I am gravely concerned for the future of my career. Medical and biological illustration is a business in which retaining copyright allows us to build a library of work from which new works can be developed. This enables us to produce work in a timely manner for clients. In addition, the licensing of these existing works is critical to the sustainability of the career. Surrendering our copyrights would severely impact how we work and force us to recreate some of the commonly used elements in new styles so not to infringe on our own work. This would cost us time and money to create the new physical work and hinder our marketability due to a lack of cohesive style.

The intent to privilege the public with access to my work will deny me my constitutional right to the ownership of my work. We live in an age where metadata can be stripped and copyright and signatures easily removed. The unlicensed use of a work can severely damage client relationships and devalues the work we create. This proposed legislation would add tremendous expense by having to register all work with multiple registries to avoid being an “orphaned work”. Then, should someone copyright a “derivative work” from an allegedly “orphaned work”, we would have to contest the ambiguous idea that the infringer reproduced the work after “due diligence” to identify the author and also be reduced to having the money generated by our work used against us when fighting for due royalties.

I greatly enjoy the work I am doing and have long looked forward to establishing my career in the field. To continue producing my work, I need the value of my skills and products recognized and protected. I deeply appreciate your time and consideration of this issue.

“To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the Exclusive Right to their respective Writing and Discoveries”.
U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Section 8

Sincerely,

Kari Opert