

Gloria Estefan Testimony
House Judiciary Committee Hearing
February 2, 2022

Good morning, everyone, my name is Gloria Estefan. I am a singer, song-writer and musician, a recording artist for over 46 years, an actress, a businesswoman and a proud member of SAG-AFTRA. And, although I would never toot my own horn, and for the benefit of those of you that may not have a clue as to who I am, I am also an eight-time Grammy winner, a recipient of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor and the Ellis Island Family Heritage Award, the Gershwin Prize For Popular Song from the Library of Congress, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and, in 2018, had the incredible honor of having one of my songs added to the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress as one of only 500 titles out of nearly 3,000,000 of the Library's recorded sound collection that were of cultural, historic and aesthetic importance to the American Soundscape. (Those are THEIR words, not mine...😄)

Thank you to Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Jordan and all the members of the Judiciary Committee for allowing me to speak here today.

Committee members, I want you to think of a song that's deeply meaningful to you...it doesn't have to be one of mine although I secretly hope it is.

Maybe it was the song that played during your first kiss. Or the favorite tune of a late relative. Or lyrics that helped you get through a difficult time in your life. Or was playing that time that someone dragged you onto the dance floor to do the Conga at some wedding...

Music speaks to the soul. It evokes emotion. It inspires. It brings us solace in challenging times and, as the late, great, Dick Clark so wisely said, "It is the soundtrack to our lives."

Music has value.

That's why I am here today to encourage you to vote in favor of the American Music Fairness Act.

Each of the songs that are precious and meaningful to you was a labor of love for the songwriters, the artists, the musicians and producers that brought it to life. They poured their own hearts and souls into its creation.

But when their music is played on the radio, artists don't get paid, only the songwriters do. The radio stations benefit from the advertising dollars. But the artists that breathed life into a song, the featured artists, the singers, producers and studio musicians, are left out.

This can be particularly problematic for older artists whose songs are not in the Top 40 but still get airplay. I would venture to guess that many of the songs that mean the most to you are ones from these music legends and I, in fact, raised my children listening to the local Oldies Station as I drove them to and from school. (At that time, the 50's, 60's and 70's were considered oldies.) My son and daughter loved, not only hearing the beautiful and catchy songs, but were also able to

learn a deep appreciation for the varied styles of music that American artists have been creating through the years.

While I am the one testifying before you today, I represent the hundreds of thousands of Americans who endeavor to make a living making music. Each of us has passion, talent, and drive. I was blessed to be able to make a full living doing what I love. You know these artists: They are your family, friends, and neighbors. They sacrifice so much to pursue their passion for music, often taking on multiple jobs to pay the bills. The American Music Fairness Act is for them.

For so many American music creators, life has become dire since the start of the pandemic. As a result of COVID, they have had to drastically cut back on live performances — or cut them out altogether — eliminating an important and often SOLE source of revenue. These hard-working middle-class Americans cannot pay the rent with the “exposure” offered to them by broadcast companies.

It simply doesn't make sense that artists are not being paid when their music is played on ONE specific platform: AM/FM radio. Why hasn't this been rectified sooner? Traditional AM/FM radio is the only platform that does not compensate performers for the sound recordings they use to fuel often billion-dollar businesses. This corporate radio loophole makes broadcast radio the only industry in America that can use another's intellectual property without permission or compensation. Every industrialized country except the United States provides a performance right. Moreover, when American-made music is played overseas, other countries collect royalties for American artists and producers but never pay those royalties because we don't reciprocate. This inequity costs the American economy and artists more than 200 million dollars each year.

I want to take a moment to point out that, although we are asking radio stations to pay their fair share, I am a very big fan of radio and its place in music. As a child, it was the only place that I could listen

to the music that got me through some of the toughest moments in my life and served as my inspiration and catharsis. Artists respect broadcast companies; all we are asking is for them to respect us back.

I am gratified that this bill includes protections for small, local broadcast stations that are important institutions in our communities. What the American Music Fairness Act **will** do is to ensure that all competing music platforms are treated equally.

Thank you again for having me here today. Your dedication to *all* artists is so deeply appreciated. I hope that you will continue your efforts, along with many champions across the Capitol, like long-time supporters Senators Leahy and Blackburn, to move this bill toward ultimate success in Washington.

We're all counting on you to help make this right. I hope you will choose to represent the hardworking men and women who contribute to our culture and bring art, joy and light to our world rather than those who simply profit from it. Life isn't fair — we can't change that — but

the payment of music royalties should be. Because that is what respect is about. Thank you for allowing me to represent my fellow artists.