WHEN I hear great American standards on the radio, I think of all the songwriters, artists and musicians whom my father, brother and I have worked with over the years. It reminds me that every recording has two parts, the composition and the performance. It also reminds me how many wonderful artists and musicians have not been paid fairly for their work.

Songwriters and publishers are paid when their tunes are played on the radio, but none of the artists or musicians who bring the music to life receive even a penny. The Senate Judiciary Committee is holding a hearing today on legislation that will right this wrong, which dates back to the early days of sound recordings.

My father, Frank Sinatra, and singers like Tony Bennett, Bing Crosby and Perry Como fought for years for performance royalties from radio stations, arguing it was unfair that performers are not paid and citing cases like Helen Forrest that show the harsh side of this injustice.

Helen was one of the most gifted singers of the 1940s. Known as the “Voice of the Name Bands,” she had hits like “I Cried for You” and “I Had the Craziest Dream.” Sadly, Helen spent her last years practically destitute because she received nothing when her songs were played on the radio.

This fight isn't just about featured artists. There are thousands of background singers and session musicians who deserve to be paid for their work, too.

Radio station owners argue that artists receive free promotion from airplay of their records. This is simply untrue. Most of the music played on AM and FM radio is at least two years old. And the practice of “backselling” — mentioning the name and performer of the song that was just played — has fallen into such disuse that a decade ago the nation’s largest radio station operator, Clear Channel, asked for $24,000 per title to mention the song's artists on the air. It’s no surprise that companies unwilling to even recognize artists on the air would also be averse to paying performance royalties.

Terrestrial radio is the only radio platform that still doesn’t have to pay these royalties. Internet radio and satellite radio pay artists when they play their records, so do cable television music channels. In fact, AM and FM radio stations that stream their signal online pay performance royalties.

The United States is one of a small number of countries where artists and musicians are
not compensated when their music is played on over-the-air radio. Because the United States doesn’t have performance royalties, radio stations in countries that do collect them do not have to pay American artists. In many of these countries, American artists make up as much as 50 percent of radio airplay, and this prevents millions of dollars — industry estimates are $100 million year — from flowing into our economy.

I believe in a performance royalty because recording artists and musicians from every generation deserve to be compensated for their art.

My father became an icon by putting his inimitable stamp on songs from “My Funny Valentine” to “My Way” and “Come Fly With Me.” When he sings, “Weatherwise it’s such a lovely day” in “Come Fly With Me,” he lingers on the word “lovely,” and you can actually imagine yourself floating in a blue sky on a lovely day.

He brought music to life with his own style just as every artist does when he takes notes and words on a page and sings or plays them in his own way. Singers and musicians, as much as songwriters, create something when they perform — and we should make sure all artists are paid when their creations are heard on the radio.

Nancy Sintra is a singer.