

2026 SESSION

LEGISLATION NOT PREPARED BY DLS
INTRODUCED

26106056D

HOUSE BILL NO. 1453

Offered January 23, 2026

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 5 of Title 18.2 a section numbered 18.2-138.1, relating to approaching a first responder with specified intent after a warning; penalty.

Patrons—Williams, Davis, Fowler, Hamilton, McLaughlin, Oates, Walker and Zehr

Referred to Committee on Public Safety

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 18.2-138.1 as follows:

§ 18.2-138.1. Approaching a first responder with specified intent after a warning; penalty.

A. As used in this section:

"Emergency medical services personnel" means any person who holds a valid certificate issued by the Commissioner of Health pursuant to § 32.1-111.5 as an emergency medical services provider, including emergency medical technicians, advanced emergency medical technicians, and paramedics.

"Firefighter" means any person, whether compensated or volunteer, who is a member of a fire company or department and is responsible for fire suppression or prevention and who is subject to the hazards of fire service.

"First responder" means a law-enforcement officer as defined in § 9.1-101, a firefighter as defined herein, emergency medical services personnel as defined herein, or a probation and parole officer as defined in § 53.1-141.

"Harass" means to willfully engage in a course of conduct directed at a first responder that intentionally causes substantial emotional distress in that first responder and serves no legitimate purpose. Mere observation, recording, or presence within 25 feet shall not, standing alone, constitute harassment.

B. It is unlawful for any person, after receiving a verbal warning not to approach from a person he knows or reasonably should know is a first responder who is engaged in the lawful performance of an official duty, to knowingly and willfully violate such warning and approach or remain within 25 feet of the first responder with the specific intent to:

1. Impede or interfere with the first responder's ability to perform such duty;

2. Threaten the first responder with physical harm; or

3. Harass the first responder.

C. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

1. Prohibit any person from observing, photographing, or making an audio or video recording of a first responder performing official duties from a distance of 25 feet or more;

2. Prohibit any person from observing, photographing, or making an audio or video recording of a first responder from any distance, provided such person does not violate subsection B;

3. Apply to any person who is the subject of the first responder's official action or the lawful representative of such person;

4. Apply to any person rendering or attempting to render medical or emergency assistance to an individual at the scene;

5. Apply to any member of the news media engaged in newsgathering activities, provided such member does not violate subsection B; or

6. Limit the authority of a first responder to establish a perimeter at the scene of a crime, accident, fire, or other emergency pursuant to existing law.

D. Any person who violates subsection B is guilty of a Class 4 misdemeanor for a first offense. A second or subsequent offense is a Class 2 misdemeanor.

E. The provisions of this section shall not preclude prosecution under § 18.2-460 or any other applicable provision of law.

2. That this act shall become effective July 1, 2026.

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