



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM**

BILL NUMBER: <b>HB 3257</b>		DATE: <b>4/7/2026</b>	
COMMITTEE: <b>Crime and Public Safety</b>			
<b>TESTIFYING:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>BRENT HEMPHILL</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
REPRESENTING: <b>MO AMBULANCE ASSN</b>		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: <b>POB 156</b>			
CITY: <b>JC</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65101</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 12:00 AM</b>	
<b>THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.</b>			



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>DAVID J KLARICH</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>314-560-1616</b>	
REPRESENTING: <b>METRO WEST FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT; ROBERTSON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT</b>		TITLE: <b>ATTORNEY</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>438 GATEFORD DRIVE</b>			
CITY: <b>BALLWIN</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>63021</b>
EMAIL: <b>dklarich@sbcglobal.net</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 4:21 PM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>DEANNA RHODES-WIDMER</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>		SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/6/2026 7:00 PM</b>
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Please support this bill. My son is KCFD and I've heard some terrible stories. Then the awful tragedy of Graham a KCFD paramedic that was stabbed to death just trying to help someone. They have enough to work around trying to keep our communities safe. Now more than ever, they also have to worry about someone trying to purposely harm them. As a mother I worry about this alot. Please do the right thing and pass this bill Thank you!



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>J TRENT FORD</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>314-409-6812</b>	
REPRESENTING: <b>AMBULANCE DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF MISSOURI</b>		TITLE: <b>PRINCIPAL</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>PO BOX 384</b>			
CITY: <b>COLUMBIA</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65205</b>
EMAIL: <b>jtrent4d@gmail.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 4:07 PM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>KATHLEEN ZUROWESTE</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>		SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 3:11 PM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>SARAH SCHLEMEIER</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
REPRESENTING: <b>MO COLLEGE OF EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS / FIRE SERVICE ALLIANCE</b>		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: <b>213 E CAPITOL</b>			
CITY: <b>JC</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65201</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 12:00 AM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>VERLEE GILKERSON</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>		SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 11:04 AM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>ARNIE C. AC "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>314-440-9000</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>STATE PUBLIC ADVOCACY</b>		TITLE: <b>STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>P.O. BOX #1535</b>			
CITY: <b>O' FALLON</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>63366</b>
EMAIL: <b>ArnieDienoff@Mail.Com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 11:57 PM</b>	

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**I am opposed to this Bill. We already many other State Statues that "First-Responders" can already use. We Do NOT NEED yet ano0ther Law into Our State Statues.**



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>KEITH ROSE</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>618-954-8151</b>
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD - ST. LOUIS CHAPTER</b>		TITLE: <b>TREASURER</b>
ADDRESS: <b>438 N. SKINKER BLVD.</b>		
CITY: <b>ST. LOUIS</b>	STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>63130</b>
EMAIL: <b>keith@growjustice.org</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 3:27 AM</b>

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For more than 75 years the members of the National Lawyers Guild - St. Louis Chapter have been committed to protecting the Constitutional Rights of Americans, including the fundamental rights of free speech, assembly, petition of government for redress, and the right to be free from unreasonable arrest.

Our members are deeply concerned that the proposed offense of 'Impeding a First Responder' would quickly become the go-to tool for government actors hoping to silence their critics or prevent citizens' from publicly recording their actions in the course of the official duties.

While we do recognize the safety concerns faced by some First Responders, the members of the National Lawyers Guild believe that this bill does not do nearly enough to attempt to mitigate the likely abuse of the proposed offense to chill Missourians' Constitutionally-protected speech or retaliate against journalists, government critics, and community watchdogs.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>KORTNIE HUDDLESTON</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 11:43 PM</b>	

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As a concerned citizen and advocate for civil liberties, I strongly oppose HB3257 (Hovis), which criminalizes “interference with a first responder” under dangerously vague and overbroad terms while imposing an unjustifiable financial burden on Missourians. These bills undermine civil liberties under the guise of protecting first responders, and their inclusion of a fiscally irresponsible death benefit expansion compounds their harm.

The bills allow first responders to issue verbal warnings and arrest individuals who approach within 25 feet, even if no harm occurs. This arbitrary distance restriction ignores real-world scenarios: journalists documenting police conduct, bystanders filming arrests, or distressed family members seeking answers during emergencies could all face Class A misdemeanor charges under this arbitrary standard. Such a provision chills First Amendment rights and shields first responders from public scrutiny, eroding trust in institutions. If enacted, Missouri could join states like Arizona and Florida, where similar “buffer zone” laws face legal challenges for violating free speech.

The bill’s reliance on ambiguous terms like “emotional distress” and “legitimate purpose” grants excessive discretion to police. These terms lack legal precision, inviting discriminatory enforcement. For example, during the 2020 protests in St. Louis, officers labeled chants of “Hands up, don’t shoot” as “distressing.” Under this law, such speech could be grounds for arrest. By equating emotional reactions with criminal intent, these bills risk silencing dissent and normalizing punitive responses to lawful criticism.

This bill is a solution in search of a problem. Existing laws already penalize genuine threats or obstruction. These bills, however, transforms routine interactions into criminal acts, prioritizing convenience over constitutional rights, while the bloated death benefit sets a reckless financial precedent. I urge you to reject this dangerous legislation and protect Missourians’ freedoms to observe, question, and hold power accountable.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>MICHAEL DREYER</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 11:42 PM</b>	

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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>SARAH BERRY</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>4/7/2026 7:11 AM</b>	
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This bill is framed as protecting first responders.

That is a legitimate goal.

The issue is not the intent—the issue is how this bill attempts to achieve it, and the constitutional risks embedded in that approach.

At the outset, I want to clearly state for the record: this testimony serves as notice of constitutional concerns associated with this proposal, including First Amendment overbreadth, vagueness, and due process implications related to enforcement discretion.

This bill creates a new criminal offense based on proximity and subjective intent following an oral warning. Specifically, it allows a person to be charged if they remain within twenty-five feet of a first responder after being told to move, if their conduct is later interpreted as “impeding,” “threatening,” or “harassing.”

The problem is that these terms—particularly “impede” and “harass”—are not narrowly defined in a way that limits arbitrary enforcement. “Harass” is defined as conduct causing “substantial emotional distress” and serving “no legitimate purpose.” That is a subjective standard, dependent on interpretation after the fact, not a clearly bounded legal threshold at the time of conduct.

This creates a classic vagueness issue.

Individuals must be able to understand what conduct is prohibited before they act. Under this bill, lawful conduct—such as observing, recording, speaking, or even asking questions—can be reclassified as criminal depending on how it is perceived by the responding official.

There is also a clear overbreadth concern. The bill does not limit its reach to actual interference or credible threats. Instead, it captures a wide range of expressive and observational conduct that is constitutionally protected. Courts have repeatedly recognized the public’s right to observe and record public officials, including law enforcement, in the performance of their duties.

A blanket twenty-five-foot restriction triggered by an oral warning risks functioning as a de facto speech and observation barrier, particularly in public spaces.

**Additionally, the enforcement mechanism itself raises due process concerns. The trigger for criminal liability is not an objective boundary or clearly marked zone—it is an oral command issued in real time. That means the scope of the law can shift from moment to moment, officer to officer, without uniform standards. This creates a system where enforcement depends heavily on discretion, increasing the risk of inconsistent or selective application.**

**The fiscal note also warrants scrutiny. The claim of “no fiscal impact” is not aligned with the creation of a new misdemeanor offense. By definition, this expands the scope of enforcement, court involvement, and fine-based revenue structures. Even the fiscal analysis acknowledges expected fine revenue and court cost distribution.**

**This is not a neutral impact—it is the creation of a new enforceable offense with downstream system effects, even if those costs are distributed rather than centralized.**

**Finally, the long-term concern is structural. This bill establishes a precedent where proximity combined with subjective interpretation can be used to criminalize otherwise lawful conduct.**

**Once that framework exists, it can be expanded, reinterpreted, or selectively enforced in ways that reach beyond its stated purpose.**

**For the record, I am placing the following on notice: the use of undefined or subjective standards tied to proximity restrictions and discretionary warnings may give rise to constitutional challenges grounded in First Amendment protections, vagueness doctrine, and due process principles.**

**Protecting first responders is important. But that protection must be achieved through narrowly tailored, clearly defined, and constitutionally sound measures.**

**This bill does not meet that standard.**

**For those reasons, I stand in opposition.**