A bill to be entitled

An act relating to impeding, threatening, or harassing first responders; creating s. 843.31, F.S.; providing definitions; specifying that peaceful recording, photographing, or observation is not harassment; prohibiting approaching a first responder or remaining within a specified distance of such person with the intent to impede, threaten, or harass the person after receiving a warning not to approach; providing criminal penalties; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 843.31, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

843.31 Approaching a first responder with specified intent after a warning.—

(1) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "First responder" includes a law enforcement officer as defined in s. 943.10(1), a firefighter as defined in s. 784.07(1), and an emergency medical care provider as defined in s. 784.07(1).

(b) "Harass" means to willfully engage in a course of conduct directed at a first responder which intentionally causes substantial emotional distress in that first responder and
serves no legitimate purpose. The peaceful audio or video recording, photographing, or eyewitness observing of a first responder is a legitimate purpose that does not, by itself, constitute harassment.

(2)(a) It is unlawful for a person, after receiving a verbal warning not to approach from a person he or she knows or reasonably should know is a first responder, who is engaged in the lawful performance of a legal duty, to knowingly and willfully violate such warning and approach or remain within 20 feet of the first responder with the intent to:

1. Interrupt, disrupt, hinder, 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.

(b) A person who violates this subsection commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

Section 2. This act shall take effect October 1, 2024.