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**NINA MOINI:** Our top story, a number of new state laws will take effect Saturday, August 1, and several of them relate to domestic violence. One details the process for giving up guns to law enforcement when domestic violence offenders are required to do so. Another gives police more time to arrest alleged abusers without a warrant. And lawmakers also approved funding for organizations that serve domestic violence survivors.

Jess Palyan is policy program manager for Violence Free Minnesota, a coalition of such groups. He's on the line now. Thanks for being with us today, Jess.

**JESS PALYAN:** Hi. Good to be with you. Thank you for having me.

**NINA MOINI:** Before we dig into specific laws, would you give us a sense for how successful you would say this year was in terms of stopping domestic violence, preventing it, and supporting survivors as it relates to the legislative session?

**JESS PALYAN:** Yeah, our field has worked for a long time to try to make sure that Minnesota is a safe and welcoming place for everybody, including and especially victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence. And I would say that we actually had a relatively successful year here this year, getting bipartisan support on a ton of domestic violence issues that we can get into here today. But I think the bottom line is that folks that survivor issues don't really lean any one direction, as opposed to they are issues faced by people of all political outlooks that can be solved by people of all political outlooks and that can be caused by people of all political outlooks. And so we're willing to work with whoever it is that is able to look at this as a system of power and control and address those issues to make sure that domestic abuse survivors get the resources they need.

**NINA MOINI:** Yeah, thank you for that. So there were a few changes that were part of a package of bills that relate to police responses, in particular to domestic violence. Would you tell us a little bit about what's changed in terms of police reporting and warrantless arrests?

**JESS PALYAN:** Yeah, thank you for that. So there was a bill that was originally HF-3946. It ended up becoming part of the public safety omnibus bill. But it has some important changes in there. It makes it so that we are tracking domestic violence calls in a similar way to the way that we already track hate crimes and carjackings so that we have a really good statewide picture of how often domestic violence calls are happening and how they are being responded to. So we now have that in a centralized spot at the BCA as opposed to at every individual department.

So that's going to be really important to organizations like mine that try to make longterm, statewide changes, having the appropriate data. But in that same bill, there were some other changes. For example, it used to be that if somebody was suspected of misdemeanor domestic violence, the police would have 72 hours to have a warrantless arrest on them. And now that is going to be a 14-day period.

Before, what we knew it was happening, is people would just stay away from the home for 72 hours. And there was not an impressive response to these, what we call, gone-on-arrival cases. So we're happy that that got extended, and we're happy that that should lead to increased safety and time for survivors who need to secure that for themselves.

In addition to that, when somebody is arrested for domestic violence, the bill requires the police and the courts to consider more before deciding to release that person. So it requires them to consider their criminal history, but also civil orders of protection, so restraining orders that are against that person. So if that person has a long history of restraining orders, we want to make sure that both courts and police are looking into that so they can make a reasonable and well-informed decision about safety when they decide whether or not to release that person.

**NINA MOINI:** Thank you for explaining that. Let's talk a little bit about firearms. There was also a bill detailing more specific instructions for firearm surrender in domestic violence cases. What are some of the situations where that would apply?

**JESS PALYAN:** Yeah, firearms are a huge domestic violence issue. Our organization, Violence Free Minnesota, creates a homicide report every year detailing every intimate partner homicide that we can track. And every year the main contributor, or the primary contributor to domestic violence homicide is gun violence. It's often the majority cause of death. And in every single year that I can think of it is the leading cause of death, even if that's only a plurality.

So it's clearly a big issue. And we've got a bipartisan bill that made it through, that makes it so that there is an actual written-down process for how to surrender a firearm if somebody is ordered to have it surrendered. So under current law-- and this is true before and true now-- if you are subject to an order for protection, which is a domestic violence restraining order, and the order says that you have to surrender your firearms, you have to surrender your firearms.

But what this law does is it gives an actual process in place so that it's clear to the police what their role is in getting those firearms. It's clear to the offender what their role is in surrendering them, how they can do that, how they can comply. It's clear that they have to surrender all of their firearms, not just the one that is alleged to have been used. And it's clear that they have to surrender their permits so that they can't get a new one. And so increasing this clarity and clarifying everybody's roles in this response, we hope, makes sure that offenders are actually going to be surrendering their firearms at a much higher rate than before.

**NINA MOINI:** Jess, do you feel like law enforcement agencies and the different stakeholders here who will be impacted, are they ready for these changes? It hasn't been that long since the session ended for these laws to come onto the books.

**JESS PALYAN:** I think they should be. If they aren't-- but I think they are. But already under law that we already had, people have to surrender their firearms. This enforcement mechanism is going to likely lead to more of those things happening. But we already had that as something that has to happen. And so hopefully police departments are already prepared to be taking on these firearms.

One of the things that this law does also is create a mechanism of a follow-up hearing for courts to ensure compliance if that person hasn't filed an affidavit saying they've complied. So there are robust systems here. And also, as a public safety matter, getting firearms out of the hands of abusers is one of the top public safety recommendations we could make. And so if we're thinking about a system of public safety, I hope that the people we trust with public safety are ready to enact this type of policy because this is how we prevent those tragic crisis situations that we so often see.

**NINA MOINI:** I understand lawmakers also passed \$12 million in funding for organizations like yours that serve and advocate for survivors because of some of the federal funding that's been taken away. Is this enough? How helpful is this going to be?

**JESS PALYAN:** It's going to be very helpful. So yes, the legislature passed \$12 million in funding for crime victim services. That's for domestic violence shelters, your sexual assault crisis centers, your advocacy services, people who help crime victims navigate the system of criminal justice, the court system, the hospitals, everything that you need to be whole after you've become the victim of a crime. This is a field that has been facing federal funding cuts for a long time, since about 2017, across administrations. And we do not believe that it's going to get much better here federally.

And so we're happy that it is getting better on a state level. Some states have not received the same type of state investment in these services that Minnesota has shown. So this \$12 million, one-time funding package will offset the anticipated federal cuts. I think we all know that flat funding in an era of inflation still works as a cut, but it should keep more doors open is the bottom line.

We want as many doors open. We want survivors to be able to reach out to services whenever they need them. And ultimately, what this will do is give us more time to ensure that our services are full, robust, and ready to receive every survivor who might call them.

We do need a longterm funding solution, and a lot of our legislative partners agree with that and they want to make this longterm solution happen because Minnesota can't count on federal funding to save us from this issue of crime victim service cuts. It hasn't happened in a long time. We need a system that keeps everybody safe, regardless of what the federal government is going to do around the funding.

**NINA MOINI:** Jess, thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate you.

**JESS PALYAN:** Thank you so much.

**NINA MOINI:** That's Jess Palyan, Policy Program Manager for Violence Free Minnesota. If you or someone you is in a dangerous situation with a partner, there's a 24-hour statewide domestic and sexual violence hotline. You can call Minnesota Day One at (866) 223-1111, or you can text (612) 399-9995