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End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin: Wisconsin victim advocates outraged by votes to restrict public benefits and deny universal background checks for gun sales

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CONTACT: Chase Tarrier, Public Policy Coordinator,
End Domestic Abuse WI
chaset@endabusewi.org, 608.237.3985

Madison — Advocates for victims of domestic violence across Wisconsin are once again expressing frustration over the actions of legislative Republicans in the Capitol. Following the Assembly's vote last week to pass a package of bills aimed at restricting access to social safety net services, the Senate passed 9 out of 10 bills of the same legislative package yesterday on a party line vote. Compounding advocates' dismay over this vote in the Senate was Assembly Republicans' decision to once again reject a widely supported bill to implement universal background checks on all gun sales.

"Yesterday's votes are showing Wisconsin advocates and survivors that many of the people elected to represent them simply do not prioritize the safety and independence of domestic violence victims," said Patti Seger, Executive Director of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin. "Domestic violence has always been a non-partisan issue and we have long relied on legislative allies from both parties to understand and respond to the unique dynamics facing survivors and their children. But the fact remains that Wisconsin victims need increased access to public benefits, not restrictions and cuts. They need common sense gun regulations like universal

background checks, not more firearms in their communities and their children's schools. If these elected officials were listening to the voices of survivors and advocates in their districts, they would know that family and intimate assaults with firearms are 12 times more likely to result in death than non-firearm assault. We have got to start addressing the root causes of domestic violence in this state, and that means real policy changes that prioritize youth prevention work, increase access to social safety net programs and make it harder for people to acquire firearms, not easier."

In the most recent Quinnipiac University poll released Tuesday, ninety-seven percent of those surveyed said they support requiring background checks for all gun buyers, while just 2 percent were opposed. Additionally, research from the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV) shows that public benefit programs that support basic economic security are critical to the ability of domestic violence victims to achieve the financial independence necessary to escape violence.

"Domestic violence does not exist in a vacuum, it arises when batterers are able to exploit existing power structures to control and abuse their victims," continued Seger. "Until we stop treating struggling families and other people in need of assistance as criminals and make real changes to the systems that affect their daily lives, we will never eradicate violence from our communities. If lawmakers are as serious as they claim to be about addressing domestic abuse, they can start with universal health care, free childcare, expanded affordable housing, living wages and real restrictions on gun access in our state."