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PRESS RELEASE

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Former District of Columbia Government Employee Pleads Guilty to Conspiring to Steal About \$800,000 in Benefits Defendant Created Fake Accounts to Generate Medicaid, Food Stamps, Other Benefits; Her Sister Also Participated in the Scheme

WASHINGTON – Aretha Holland-Jackson, a former employee of the District of Columbia Department of Human Services (DHS), pled guilty today to carrying out a scheme that defrauded the government of roughly \$800,000 in Medicaid, food stamps, and other benefits.

The plea was announced by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. and Charles J. Willoughby, Inspector General of the District of Columbia.

Holland-Jackson, 45, of Bowie, Md., pled guilty in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to a charge of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. The Honorable Amy Berman Jackson scheduled sentencing for May 7, 2014. Under federal sentencing guidelines, she faces a likely sentence of 33 months to 41 months in prison, as well as financial penalties. The plea agreement calls for Holland-Jackson to pay \$807,789 in restitution to the District of Columbia government. She also will be subject to a forfeiture money judgment in the same amount.

Also in court today, Holland-Jackson's sister, Allison Holland, pled guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud for her role in the scheme. Holland, 47, of Cheltenham, Md., faces a likely sentence of 15 to 31 months in prison under federal sentencing guidelines, as well as financial penalties. She also must pay full restitution as well as a forfeiture money judgment. Allison Holland also is to be sentenced on May 7, 2014.

According to the government's evidence, from February 2005 until September 2013, Holland-Jackson was employed as a social services representative in DHS's Office of Medical Assistance. Her duties included processing applications for public assistance. She had access to DHS's computer system and was able to open cases and activate benefits of Medicaid, food

stamps, and Temporary Cash Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). DHS distributed food stamp and TANF benefits through an electronic benefits transfer card (EBT) that was provided to beneficiaries who qualified for assistance. These cards could be used at ATMs.

From February 2011 through September 2013, Holland-Jackson and others, including her sister, participated in a scheme to defraud the benefits programs. Holland-Jackson used fictitious names and Social Security numbers to activate 23 fraudulent cases. She and others, including her sister, then used the benefits cards associated with these fraudulent accounts to make hundreds of thousands of dollars in withdrawals from ATMs. Allison Holland used three of the fraudulent EBTs. Holland-Jackson also activated Medicaid benefits in the 23 fraudulent cases.

All told, according to the court papers, the scheme cost the District of Columbia government at least \$783,876: \$196,596 in fraudulent food stamp benefits, \$233,227 in fraudulent TANF benefits, and \$354,053 in fraudulent Medicaid benefits, among other costs.

Holland-Jackson was arrested in September 2013 after a law enforcement investigation.

“As a District of Columbia employee, Aretha Holland-Jackson was supposed to provide benefits to needy families, but instead she used her position of trust to steal more than \$800,000 of those benefits to finance her own lifestyle,” said U.S. Attorney Machen. “She used fake names and social security numbers to load up ATM cards with hundreds of thousands of dollars of benefits that she could withdraw in cash. Public assistance fraud diverts resources intended to serve families with real needs. This prosecution shows how committed we are to aggressively pursuing government employees who think they can get away with robbing taxpayers of their hard-earned money.”

“The Office of the Inspector General continues to be proud of its role in collaborating with local entities and our federal partners in rooting out criminal conduct and preventing the misuse of District monies, the latter of which is all the more important during these economic times,” said Inspector General Willoughby.

In announcing the plea, U.S. Attorney Machen and Inspector General Willoughby praised the work of those who investigated the case from the District of Columbia’s Office of the Inspector General. They also expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and the District of Columbia Department of Human Services. They acknowledged the efforts of those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney’s Office, including Paralegal Specialist Corinne Kleinman and former Paralegal Specialist Diane Hayes. Finally, they commended the work of Assistant U.S. Attorney David S. Johnson, who is prosecuting the matter, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Lucas, who is assisting with forfeiture issues.