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PRESS RELEASE

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Former Executive Director of Public Charter School Pleads Guilty to Stealing \$29,000 in Funds -Defendant Wrote Series of Checks for Personal Benefit-

WASHINGTON – Monique S. Murdock, 44, the former executive director of Nia Community Public Charter School, pled guilty today to a federal theft charge stemming from the embezzlement of \$29,000 in funds meant for the school.

As part of her guilty plea, Murdock also admitted making unauthorized purchases with a government-issued purchase card while she worked for another employer in Virginia.

The guilty plea was announced by Ronald C. Machen Jr., U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia; Dana J. Boente, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Valerie Parlave, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office; Charles J. Willoughby, Inspector General for the District of Columbia, and Steven Anderson, Special Agent in Charge, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education.

Murdock, of Fort Washington, Md., pled guilty in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to a charge of theft from a program receiving federal funds. The Honorable Richard J. Leon scheduled sentencing for Feb. 26, 2014. Under the plea agreement, Murdock must pay criminal forfeiture and restitution. Under the voluntary federal sentencing guidelines, she faces six to 12 months of incarceration.

According to a statement of offense, signed by the defendant as well as the government, Murdock was a co-founder of Nia Community Public Charter School and its executive director from June 2006 through October 2008. As the executive director of the Northeast Washington school, she had the primary responsibility of overseeing its fiscal management.

Public charter schools are independently-operated public schools that are open to all District of Columbia residents. Enrollment is on a space-available basis. Public charter schools receive public funds based on the number of students they enroll. Nia Community Public Charter School, for example, received funding through the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board as well as through the U.S. Department of Education.

Between July 2006 and August 2008, the school received more than \$3.3 million from the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board. The school also received more than \$548,000 from the U.S. Department of Education during the 2007 and 2008 fiscal years.

From March 2008 through August 2008, Murdock signed five checks on the school's account, totaling \$29,000, and converted them to her own personal use and benefit.

The theft charge involved the money stolen from the charter school.

The guilty plea also resolves a criminal investigation in Virginia. After separating from the school, Murdock was hired in August 2009 as a Child Youth and School Services Assistant Director by the Cody Development Center in Fort Myer, Va. In this position, she was provided with a government purchase card that was to be used for buying work-related items.

As part of her plea, Murdock admitted that from February 2012 through December 2012 while employed by the Cody Development Center, she used her government purchase card to make \$11,773 in unauthorized gift card purchases.

Murdock has agreed to pay \$29,000 in restitution to the U.S. Department of Education and another \$11,773 to the U.S. Department of Defense.

The theft from Nia Community Public Charter School was investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office, the District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Inspector General. The activities at the Cody Development Center were investigated by the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Defense.

U.S. Attorney Machen, Acting U.S. Attorney Boente, Assistant Director in Charge Parlave, Inspector General Willoughby, and Special Agent in Charge Anderson commended the work of those who investigated the matters. They also acknowledged the efforts of those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, including Paralegal Specialists Krishawn Graham and Diane Hayes and Assistant U.S. Attorney Catherine K. Connelly, who assisted with forfeiture issues. Finally, they thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Lionel André, who is prosecuting the case.