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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 6, 2014

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Former District of Columbia Government Employee Sentenced to 20 Months in Prison for \$783,876 Fraud Scheme Defendant Created Fake Accounts to Steal Medicaid, Food Stamp, and 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), was sentenced today to 20 months in prison for carrying out a scheme that defrauded the government of more than \$780,000 in Medicaid, food stamp, and other benefits, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. and Blanche L. Bruce, Interim Inspector General of the District of Columbia.

Holland-Jackson, 45, of Bowie, Md., pled guilty in February 2014 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to a charge of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. She was sentenced by the Honorable Amy Berman Jackson. Upon completion of her prison term, Holland-Jackson will be placed on 3 years of supervised release. She must pay \$783,876 in restitution to the District of Columbia government.

Holland-Jackson's sister, Allison Holland, was sentenced by Judge Jackson on May 21, 2014, to a year and a day in prison for conspiracy to commit wire fraud for her role in the scheme. Holland, 47, of Cheltenham, Md., also pled guilty in February 2014. She must join her sister in paying the restitution. Upon completion of her prison term, Holland will be placed on three years of supervised release.

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 to withdraw the cash TANF benefits and at grocery stores to use the food stamp benefits.

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 at DHS. She and others, including her sister, then used the EBT cards associated with these fraudulent accounts to make hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash withdrawals from ATMs and purchases at grocery stores. Allison Holland personally 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. On the day of her arrest, Holland-Jackson was caught having recently used one of the fraudulent EBT cards to withdraw cash TANF benefits from an ATM near her place of employment. Law enforcement officials recovered eight fraudulent EBT cards from Holland-Jackson's wallet.

"Aretha Holland-Jackson abused her position of trust to loot government programs designed to help the neediest members of our community," said U.S. Attorney Machen. "She lined her own pockets with nearly \$800,000 intended to provide food and medicine to our most vulnerable neighbors. This prison sentence should deter other crooked public officials tempted to rip off taxpayers and deprive poor citizens to serve their own interests."

"This successful prosecution is due to the commitment and collaboration of the Office of the Inspector General, the District of Columbia Department of Human Services, the Metropolitan Police Department, and our federal partner, the United States Attorney's Office, to root out fraudulent schemes against District benefit programs and preserve public funding dedicated for those in need," said Interim Inspector General Bruce.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen and Interim Inspector General Bruce 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 Johnson, who prosecuted the case, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Lucas, who assisted with forfeiture issues.