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**DEPARTMENT OF AGING**  
*Choice, Independence and Dignity for Older Marylander*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **NEW STATE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN SELECTED**

Baltimore, MD ( July 6, 2010) - Gloria Lawlah, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Aging, announced today the selection of Alice H. Hedt as Maryland's State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. In this position, Hedt will be responsible for administering the statewide Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program including providing direction, training and education, monitoring, and evaluation of the local components of the Program administered by the Area Agencies on Aging. The State Ombudsman also has responsibilities for special long-term care and advocacy-related projects, and other program activities under Title VII of the Older Americans Act. Ms. Hedt will join the Department on August 9, 2010.

The Maryland Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program serves nearly 50,000 people who live in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Forty local ombudsmen as well as volunteer ombudsmen protect the rights and promote the well-being of residents by providing consumers with information about long-term care services, resolving complaints about specific problems experienced by residents, and educating consumers and long-term care providers about residents' rights and good care practices. Last year, the Program handled over 4,000 complaints, provided over 150 training sessions for facility staff, and assisted over 6,000 individuals seeking information.

Hedt has more than 25 years experience in aging and long-term care issues, including starting the first regional ombudsman program to serve the eight county area around Charlotte, North Carolina and heading the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center funded by the federal Administration on Aging. For five years, she led NCCNHR: The National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform in its efforts to provide information and leadership on policy development and strategies for improving care for residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

Throughout the country, Hedt has promoted the reduction of pressure sores and restraints through the Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes Campaign and has testified before the U. S. Senate on the importance of the Nursing Home Reform Law which protects residents in nursing homes receiving Medicare and Medicaid funds. She has developed materials

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to promote residents' rights, overseen the development of Ombudsman Best Practices, advocated for resident directed care, and worked to make sure that emergency plans are in place for residents in case of natural disasters. She has also developed and administered alternatives to facility based care in Maryland and North Carolina including adult day health, community based respite care, and services for older adults living in public housing.

Lawlah also welcomed Robbyn McIntosh to the Department of Aging as the Ombudsman Program Specialist. McIntosh, a lifelong Maryland resident, will join the Department's efforts to advocate for long term care residents. A graduate of Morgan State University and Howard University School of Law, McIntosh has practiced law for more than 20 years.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program was established by the federal government to address widely reported problems of abuse, neglect and substandard care in nursing homes nationwide. *"As the population ages and the number of persons requiring long-term care increases, we must remain vigilant in our efforts to protect the health, safety, and rights of residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities,"* said Lawlah. *"I am very pleased that Alice Hedt and Robbyn McIntosh will be leading Maryland's efforts to promote better quality of care for Maryland long-term care residents."*

*"I am excited and challenged by this opportunity to work with and on behalf of long-term care residents in Maryland,"* stated Hedt who has lived in the state for fourteen years. *"The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is uniquely positioned to address the problems experienced by individual residents and to promote systemic changes to improve the quality of life for vulnerable older adults."*

The State Ombudsman Program is one of many programs within the Maryland Department of Aging, a Cabinet level department within Maryland State Government. In partnership with a network of 19 Local Area Agencies on Aging, the Department provides leadership and advocacy for older Marylanders, their families and caregivers through information, education, programs and services. For more information about services visit <http://www.mdoa.state.md.us/> or call 1-800-AGE-DIAL.

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