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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**COLUMBUS WOMAN SENTENCED FOR EMBEZZLING HUD PROGRAM FUNDS,
FILING FALSE INCOME TAX RETURNS**

COLUMBUS – Wendy Harper, 44, of Columbus, Ohio was sentenced in U.S. District Court to 24 months in prison, three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution in the amounts of \$588,121.46 to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for embezzling HUD program funds from her employer, and \$126,345.36 to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for filing a false federal income tax return.

Carter M. Stewart, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Brad Geary, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General, and Kathy A. Enstrom, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation announced the sentence handed down today by U.S. District Judge Gregory L. Frost.

According to court documents, Harper was responsible for managing payroll and payment functions for her employer, Harvest Management Group, Inc., which managed more than 900 units for elderly and disabled people who qualify for HUD assistance. Harper manipulated the payroll system to give herself unauthorized salary increases and unauthorized mileage reimbursements between 2009 and 2012. According to calculations made by criminal investigators in this case, Harper would have had to have driven more than 1,200,000 miles in order for the mileage reimbursements to have been legitimate.

Harper pleaded guilty to the aforementioned charges on February 6, 2014. In her plea agreement, Harper acknowledged that the U.S. showed the amount of money she embezzled was \$588,121.46 and that she concealed her crime by filing false federal income tax returns for 2009, 2010 and 2011, on which she failed to report the HUD program funds she stole. Harper's theft of these program funds contributed to Harvest Management Group, Inc. having difficulties maintaining the properties to minimum HUD standards and paying its property taxes.

U.S. Attorney Stewart commended the investigation by HUD and the IRS, the Reynoldsburg Police who referred the case for federal investigation, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Dale E. Williams Jr., who represented the United States in this case.

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