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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

COLUMBUS COUNCILWOMAN SENTENCED ON ETHICS VIOLATION

Les Wright, former Columbus City Councilwoman, was sentenced to 6 months in jail for violating state ethics laws. The sentence was suspended in return for one year probation and performance of 120 hours of community service at the Columbus AIDS Task Force, a \$1,000 fine, and court costs. Wright was also ordered to pay \$2,500 to the Ohio Ethics Commission toward the reimbursement of the Commission's investigative costs. Wright had already resigned her city council position late last year as part of her plea agreement.

The sentence came after Wright pled no contest on January 19, 1999 to a conflict of interest charge involving her city council votes to award city grants to a corporation that was in the process of purchasing property she owned. "The Ohio Ethics Commission members were particularly troubled by the fact that, on four separate occasions, Councilwoman Wright voted in favor of grants to Metropolitan Residential Services, when she was aware that MRS was purchasing the property she owned," stated Santiago Feliciano, Jr., Chair of the Commission.

Judge David Johnson found Wright guilty of the criminal charge. Wright entered into a plea agreement to resolve felony and misdemeanor charges against her referred by the Ohio Ethics Commission to the Franklin County Prosecutor. The ethics charges resulted from Wright's sponsorship and votes for two grants totaling \$116,565 for Metropolitan Residential Services. Three weeks after receiving the second grant for \$59,285, MRS purchased a building co-owned by Wright and former City Council President Jerry Hammond.

The Ohio Ethics Commission is an independent agency of state government charged with interpreting and administering the Ohio Ethics Law for many state and local public officials

and employees. The Commission has been serving the public, and state and local governments, since its formation as part of the Ohio Ethics Law in 1973.