



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**The State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program Has a New Name and a New Home
at Michigan Elder Justice Initiative**

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The State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, formerly housed within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, is now the Michigan Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, a program of Michigan Elder Justice Initiative, a non-profit based in Lansing.

The state-wide ombudsman program is charged with addressing the quality of life and quality of care experienced by residents living in nursing homes, homes for the aged, and adult foster care facilities. The program engages in a variety of systemic advocacy efforts to empower and protect long term care consumers and supports the 20 local Long Term Care Ombudsmen throughout the state. These local ombudsmen are housed at various nonprofits across Michigan and they are responsible for visiting facilities, advocating for residents, and investigating and resolving resident concerns. Michigan Elder Justice Initiative (MEJI) currently runs two local Long Term Care Ombudsman programs – one in Lansing and one in Jackson.

Prior to October 1, 2016, the State Long Term Care Ombudsman was housed within the Aging and Adult Services Agency of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Last month, the program was transferred from state government to MEJI, an independent nonprofit well-equipped to manage this program. In addition to managing two local ombudsman programs, MEJI has served as legal counsel to the State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program for several years.

Alison Hirschel, Director of MEJI, explained: “The Michigan Elder Justice Initiative, and our parent program, the Michigan Advocacy Program, are truly honored that the Michigan Aging and Adult Services Agency is entrusting us with an opportunity to contribute to the care of older adults and people with disabilities across Michigan in this new role.”

Beginning later this month, Salli Pung will take over the reins as the new State Ombudsman. Ms. Pung brings over 20 years of experience to this position. For the last 13 years, she has served as the Nursing Facility Relocation Coordinator at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services where she oversees nursing facility closures and ensures that residents are protected and empowered in this process. Previously, Ms. Pung served as the Program Manager for MI Health Link, Senior Program Manager at the Center for Long Term Care at the Michigan Public Health Institute, and Director of Education and Shared Services at the Michigan Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (now called Leading Age). Ms. Pung began her career in this arena when she served as a nursing assistant in a nursing home during college. With her diverse experience and longstanding dedication to improving the lives of residents of licensed long term care facilities, Ms. Pung is an ideal choice to serve in this role. Ms. Pung is also benefitting from the incomparable knowledge and support of Sarah Slocum, who has served as the State Long Term Care Ombudsman since 2004 and continues to assist MEJI as a consultant during this transition.

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