NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

For Immediate Release:

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Columbia Man, 19, Sentenced in String of Robberies Targeting Elderly Women

A 19-year-old Columbia man arrested for a string of robberies targeting elderly victims in May has been sentenced to 18 months in jail. Zayah Abdul Hassan, of the 7100 block of Talisman Lane, pleaded guilty to one count of theft scheme— $100 to under $1,500, and one count of robbery on December 4 and was sentenced this morning by Howard County Circuit Court Judge Richard S. Bernhardt.

Police reported that two elderly women were accosted near the 7000 block of Cradlerock Way in east Columbia on May 14 and 22, and had their purses stolen. A third woman, riding on a mobility scooter, had her purse stolen on May 30. With surveillance video and investigation by neighborhood community resource officers, police identified Zayah Alhassan and made an arrest. He also was charged with the May 10 burglary of a residence located in the 7100 block of Honeyladen Place in Columbia.

At sentencing, Assistant State's Attorney Danielle Duclaux told the court that Alhassan has no prior adult convictions but possesses a prior juvenile record. In January, he will be tried for the August 17, second-degree assault of another inmate incarcerated at the Howard County Detention Center.

Noting that Alhassan had "preyed" on the elderly, Judge Bernhardt sentenced Alhassan to six months in jail on the theft scheme charge, to be served concurrently with an 18-month sentence on the robbery charge (structured as 10 years, suspending all but 18 months). Upon his eventual release Alhassan faces three years of supervised probation and was ordered to pay $145 in court costs and $493 restitution to one of the victims. Charges in the burglary case were dropped as part of the plea agreement but Alhassan was ordered to have no contact with any of the victims, in both cases, upon his release.

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