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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Maryland Retains Triple AAA Bond Rating,  
To Sell Up To \$1.19947 Billion of General Obligation Bonds**

ANNAPOLIS (February 24, 2017) – Maryland State Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp announced today that all three major national bond rating agencies have re-affirmed the State's strong AAA bond rating, all with stable outlooks, in preparation for the upcoming competitive sale of State General Obligation Bonds on Wednesday, March 8, 2017.

Maryland is one of 11 states\* to hold the coveted AAA rating, the highest possible rating, from all three major bond rating agencies. S&P Global Ratings (formerly Standard and Poor's) has rated the bonds AAA since 1961. Moody's Investors has assigned the bonds a rating of Aaa since 1973, and Fitch Ratings has rated the bonds AAA since 1993.

Treasurer Kopp said, "We are pleased and proud that Maryland again has been recognized as a strong AAA State. The retention of an AAA rating from all three major bond rating firms is an affirmation of our State's continuing overall fiscal strength and longstanding commitment to prudent and proactive financial management. The rating agencies recognize the contribution of our diverse economy, well-educated workforce, and above-average wealth and income levels to the overall quality of an investment in Maryland."

"The taxpayers of Maryland will continue to save millions of dollars as they benefit from lower interest rates prompted by these AAA ratings. This achievement allows us to continue to invest in our communities, notably our schools, libraries, institutions of

higher education, healthcare facilities and cultural projects important to the residents of our State,” Treasurer Kopp added.

Fitch, in assigning its AAA rating and stable outlook, said: “Maryland’s ‘AAA’ rating reflects its broad, diverse and wealthy economy, extensive budget controls and sound financial operations, and strong management of debt.”

Fitch Ratings further noted: “Fiscal management is very strong, with consensus-oriented long-term planning and multiple sources of flexibility including a consistently solid budgetary reserve and a demonstrated ability to adjust spending to address changing circumstances.”

Moody’s, in explaining its Aaa rating and stable outlook said “The highest quality rating reflects Maryland’s strong financial management policies, strong liquidity levels, stable economy and high personal income levels.” While Moody’s acknowledged “...the state’s economic exposure to constrained federal spending, and above average debt and pension burdens stemming from the state’s practice of issuing debt and absorbing certain pension costs on behalf of local governments,” they also noted “[c]onsistent with its history of proactive financial management, the state has proactively addressed its structural budget gap and pension funding challenges even under historically slow economic growth conditions.”

In assigning its AAA long-term rating and stable outlook, S&P Global Ratings said: “The ‘AAA’ GO rating reflects what we view as Maryland’s: Broad and diverse economy, which continues to recover slowly after weakness in recent years due to federal budget uncertainty and sequestration; Strong wealth and income levels relative to that of the nation; Long history of proactive financial and budget management, including implementation of frequent and timely budget adjustments to align revenues and expenditures and long-term financial planning that should continue to be helpful in addressing future budget challenges; and Well-developed debt management practices with a moderate debt burden for most measures and rapid amortization, although long-term pension and other postemployment benefits (OPEB) liabilities are relatively high, in our opinion.”

S&P Global Ratings further stated: “The stable outlook reflects Maryland’s continued focus on structural budget alignment and maintenance of minimum state reserve levels, despite continued slow economic growth. The state’s continued practice of making

proactive midyear adjustments to align the budget in case of slower-than-anticipated revenue growth will remain an important credit factor over the two-year outlook horizon, given Maryland's above-average economic dependence on federal government employment and spending.”

All three rating agencies praised Maryland's history of strong, sound financial management. Moody's recognized “Maryland's financial practices and flexibility are very strong. For example, the state has a binding consensus revenue forecast, multiyear financial planning, and its Board of Public Works, consisting of the Governor, the Comptroller and the Treasurer, is able to respond swiftly to mid-year budget challenges. The state also has no tax and spending limitations or supermajority requirements limiting its flexibility.” S&P Global Ratings assigned a rating of “strong” to Maryland's management practices, noting that such a designation “indicates that practices are strong, well embedded and likely sustainable” and that “...Maryland has made continuing efforts to institute sound financial management practices.” In assessing Maryland's operating performance, Fitch concluded: “Financial resilience is very strong, with a well-funded budgetary reserve and a willingness to trim spending commitments and increase revenues in response to changing circumstances. Multi-year forecasting and planning are disciplined... Consensus-oriented practices ensure steady management of budgetary conditions and liabilities.”

Each of the rating agencies commented on the State's long-term pension liabilities as well as efforts undertaken to improve funding levels. While noting that “[t]he financial condition of Maryland's retirement system represents the state's most significant credit challenge,” Moody's recognized the State's many efforts to manage its pension burden as “[d]emonstrating its proactive management approach.” Fitch Ratings noted, “[p]ensions are a comparative credit weakness in Maryland, although the state has taken repeated action since 2011 to reform benefits and made contributions to strengthen funding” and “to improve pension sustainability and accelerate funded ratio improvement over time.” S&P Global Ratings indicated “[w]e believe the state's pension-funded ratio is relatively low,” but noted they expect to “monitor the state's future adherence to its revised pension funding policy to budget for actuarially based pension contributions and demonstrate strong funding discipline and commitment to funding the long-term liability.”

The bond sale will include three competitive bids which are expected to be sold to institutions. The sale will include \$575 million of tax-exempt bonds, \$100 million of taxable bonds, and up to \$524.47 million of tax-exempt refunding bonds.

As has always been the case with the issuance of Maryland's tax-exempt General Obligation Bonds, the State uses the proceeds to finance necessary capital projects, such as schools, community colleges, university projects and hospitals.

The Maryland Board of Public Works, composed of Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., Comptroller Peter Franchot and Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp, will preside over the competitive bond sale on Wednesday, March 8, 2017 in the Assembly Room in the Goldstein Treasury Building in Annapolis.

The Maryland State Treasurer's Office expects to conduct another bond sale in July or August 2017.

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\* The other 10 states with AAA ratings from all three rating agencies are Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Missouri, North Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Virginia.