GOVERNOR O’MALLEY TAPS EDUCATOR, WRITER STANLEY PLUMLY AS STATE’S NEW POET LAUREATE

ANNAPOLIS, MD (October 1, 2009) – Governor Martin O’Malley today announced the appointment of Stanley Plumly to the honorary position of State Poet Laureate. Mr. Plumly, a Maryland Distinguished University Professor since 1998, is the founder of the Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing at the University of Maryland, College Park, and has taught at more than a dozen of the most prestigious universities in the country.

“We are fortunate to have Stanley Plumly, one of our nation’s most critically acclaimed poets, as Maryland’s new Poet Laureate,” said Governor O’Malley. “Poetry has the ability to give voice to those experiences, feelings and ideas that are most meaningful and most important to our Maryland citizens and I look forward to working with him as he travels around our State to share his gift.”

“I am flattered by this appointment and I look forward to being a part of the best of Maryland culture,” said Mr. Plumly. Mr. Plumly was selected by Governor O’Malley from recommendation made by the Poet Laureate Selection Committee, chaired by renowned author and Maryland resident, Alice McDermott. Ms. McDermott is an award winning author and a Johns Hopkins University Richard A. Macksey Professor of the Humanities.

“Poetry acknowledges our collective spirit, our common experience, while celebrating, too, the complexity of the human situation, and the value of each individual voice,” said Ms. McDermott. “Poetry reminds us that our language, so often abused and misused, is also a great gift that can inspire, sustain and unite.”

She quoted the first section of Plumly’s poem “Out-Of-The-Body Travel,” about his father playing the fiddle:

And then he would lift this finest
of furniture to his big left shoulder
and tuck it in and draw the bow
so carefully as to make the music

almost visible on the air. And play
and play until a whole roomful of the sad relatives mourned. They knew this was
drawing of blood, threading and rethreading

the needle. They saw even in my father’s
face how well he understood the pain
he put them to--his raw, red cheek
pressed against the cheek of the wood . . .
Stanley Plumly is the author of nine books of poetry, including Old Heart (Norton, 2008), which won the Los Angeles Times Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2007. Most recently, Mr. Plumly has authored Posthumous Keats (Norton, 2008), a “personal biography” of the English poet, John Keats, which has received widespread critical acclaim by reviewers for The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, The New Yorker, among others, and his poems, essays, articles, and reviews have appeared in many of the country’s best periodicals and newspapers.

Stanley Plumly is the recipient of numerous awards including eight Pushcart Prizes, the Paterson Poetry Prize (2007), an Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2002), and a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation (2001).

The Poet Laureate position was formally established by the Maryland General Assembly in 1959 and authorizes the Governor to appoint a citizen of the State as Poet Laureate of Maryland. Eight Poet Laureates have served for the State since the inception of this Act in 1959. Past Poet Laureates include (in order of service): Maria B. Coker, Vincent Godfrey Burns, Lucille Clifton, Reed Whitehorse, Linda Pasta, Roland Flint, Michael Collier and most recently, Michael Glaser.

In 2004, the Maryland State Arts Council developed an open and inclusive selection process that welcomed Poet Laureate nominations from citizens across the State. Eligible nominees were required to be Maryland residents, demonstrate a proven history of publication, and must have received critical acclaim as demonstrated by special honors, awards, or other recognitions. For information on the Poet Laureate contact the Maryland State Arts Council at 410-767-6555.

The Maryland State Arts Council, an agency of the Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts, is dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive. In FY 2008, the Maryland arts industry contributed $1.2 billion to the State’s economy and provided 15,000 jobs to Maryland residents. For more information about the Maryland State Arts Council visit the MSAC web site at www.msac.org or call 410-767-6555 or TDD/TTY 800-735-2258.