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UFAD Responds to Allocation of \$50 Million for Mildred Hailey Repairs

On January 20, Mayor Michelle Wu held a [press conference](#) with almost no residents in attendance at the Mildred Hailey Apartments in Jamaica Plain. She announced \$50 million in funding to repair parts of the development as well as an executive order on “fair housing.”

This comes only after several months of activism by community and tenant organizers focused on exposing the Boston Housing Authority’s corrupt neglect and mismanagement of the apartments. This is a big victory for tenant organizing and shows that funding to repair public housing can be won if people come together to fight. It also shows that the government is not being honest when they say that there is no money to repair public housing and that therefore privatization and Section 8 conversions are the only solution.

However, in spite of flowery words from officials that “public housing is our future,” the city and Boston Housing Authority (BHA) have not changed their plans to privatize public housing at Mildred Hailey and around Boston. BHA is still going ahead with their [plans to replace](#) 8 buildings at Mildred Hailey with Section 8 and unsubsidized apartments under private management and ownership. What was also deceptively left out of the speeches and news coverage is that another [\\$17 million](#) have been set aside for “future development”. This almost certainly means future phases of privatization, which would make public housing in this complex a thing of the past.

The deceptiveness does not end there, however. Though the Mayor’s [executive order](#) was celebrated by the media as a major step for “fair and affordable housing,” the order itself doesn’t even mention affordable housing and it certainly says nothing about protecting or expanding public housing. Instead, it talks about “replacing segregated living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns” and “transforming racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity.” This is just an updated version of the racist “de-concentration of poverty” language that has been used by politicians for decades to justify the destruction of public housing and make way for unaffordable real-estate development. It is a twisted use of social justice language to dress up gentrification as “racial integration.”

These \$50 million would have never come if not for the tireless fight waged by organizations of community and resident activists, including GBIO and UFAD. But if tenants don’t have a voice in how this money is spent, it will disappear into the pockets of corrupt housing officials and contractors. So now we must continue the struggle to ensure the money is actually used to make needed repairs and to build up toward larger victories, such as the cancellation of privatization plans and the return of tenant management.

The fight for public housing is not over.