

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday February 16th, 2023

Manhattanville Tenants Demand NYCHA Repair Apartments Without Privatization

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For years, NYCHA has engaged in a consistent and extreme pattern of willful negligence of its properties, irresponsibly forcing residents to inhabit dangerous apartments which have major mold problems, pest infestations, and the like. Tenants of Manhattanville Houses in Harlem are releasing letters and photos detailing NYCHA's systematic neglect of their apartments. In some apartments NYCHA has left gaping holes in the walls for weeks or months at a time. Tenants have filed dozens of work orders and complaints about these problems, only to face disrespect and inaction from NYCHA management. This is part of the national plan of Housing Authorities to intentionally run developments into the ground in order to justify privatization. Here in New York City, NYCHA is pushing privatization of all public housing with the PACT and Public Housing Preservation Trust schemes.

NYCHA and its developer partners portray privatization as the best solution to the capital needs of public housing and therefore the best way to address NYCHA properties' state of disrepair. In reality, this is a bait-and-switch. When private developers and management companies take over, they have a million ways to officially and unofficially displace many of the residents: requiring tenants to re-apply and qualify to return, new and unreasonable rules, botched relocations, mass evictions, and more. And even when privatizations do not lead to immediate mass displacement, they set the stage for such displacement over the longer term by replacing public housing with combinations of non-subsidized, often extremely expensive units and Section 8.

Through these privatization schemes here and across the country, huge amounts of wealth are passing from public to private hands. Developers and management companies get access to prime real estate which they can then redevelop to bring in higher-paying tenants and gentrify the neighborhood. They also get tax breaks in the form of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, and a massive direct subsidy from Section 8 vouchers paid by the federal government. This is nothing but corporate loot and plunder, carried out at the expense of public housing residents who are expected to put up with worsening neglect in the meantime.

NYCHA must immediately take action to fix these issues. This must be done without any form of privatization, which Manhattanville tenants are firmly opposed to. In 2022, over 200 Manhattanville residents signed a petition opposing the PACT privatization scheme and NYCHA's recent approval for the development of a 26-story luxury condo tower to be built in the middle of Manhattanville Houses.

Arrangements to address these issues include but are not limited to:

- Properly remediating mold (not by painting over it as seems to be acceptable to NYCHA), lead, and other health hazards present in numerous NYCHA apartments and addressing the root causes (leaky roofs and plumbing issues, for instance) of these problems.
- Thoroughly addressing pest infestations, including mice, rats, cockroaches, and bedbugs.
- Making necessary repairs within apartments as well as common areas, including but not limited to properly closing holes, fixing broken or missing locks, doors, windows, and cabinets.
- Arranging and promptly following through on apartment transfers for tenants who are underhoused and/or living in dangerous conditions, many of whom have been waiting for years.

We demand the prompt resolution of the egregious issues documented here, as well as broader action to address the similar issues faced by the majority of NYCHA residents which are threatening their health and livelihoods.