

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 136
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 156
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We urge you to recognize the importance of the Federal Impact Aid Program as you set the Appropriation Subcommittee's funding priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. We fully recognize the fiscal restraint that will govern the Subcommittee's actions this year, but we request strong and continued funding for all line items of the Impact Aid Program, including Basic Support and Federal Properties, to ensure all federally connected school districts can provide a quality education.

Congress created Impact Aid in 1950 in recognition that the federal government needed to accept responsibility in areas impacted by a federal presence and help meet the local responsibility of financing public education. Impact Aid provides a payment in lieu of taxes to local school districts for lost revenue that is a result of tax-exempt federal property and actions that have increased expenditures due to the enrollment of federally connected children. The program provides direct, flexible funding to over 1,200 school districts. Impact Aid funds a range of programs, including facilities renovation, efforts to retain highly qualified teachers, adequate technology, and maintenance of transportation fleets. For many districts, this funding represents the very lifeblood that allows their school system to operate.

Congress should prioritize Basic Support to ensure the current payout level to school districts is maintained. For districts enrolling military children, the ability to address both the academic and emotional needs of these students must be maintained. Education is a quality-of-life issue for military families, and it is our firm belief that as military personnel defend our country we must not forget or ignore the children they leave behind.

The needs of districts enrolling children who reside on Indian lands—of whom over 93 percent are Native American—also must not be overlooked. These districts strive to find creative ways to integrate curriculum and best practices to prepare students for success. Often, these school districts are located in rural areas with few taxpayers and where administrators double as bus drivers, teachers, and coaches. These dollars provide a foundational education program for all students; many schools would close their doors without the support of Impact Aid.

Federal Properties school districts depend on Impact Aid due to a limited local tax base caused by the presence of certain federal land in their districts, including national parks and grasslands, national

laboratories, Army Corps of Engineers projects, and property that encompasses the military academies. In some of these communities, the federal government is the largest landowner, which significantly diminishes a school district's revenue base. Congress should prioritize this funding stream to reflect the addition of eligible Federal Property school districts. We urge you to support strong and continued funding for the entire Impact Aid Program. The potential of long-term funding stagnation or program cuts is of serious concern given the changing needs of the program and the students they serve. Impact Aid is not only the federal government's obligation, but also a tax relief program for local communities. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

John Barrasso M.D.
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

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