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Military Families and School Superintendents Sound the Alarm on Harmful Consequences of Impact Aid Vouchers

Washington, D.C. – April 19, 2018 – Today, school district leaders and organizations representing military families discussed the grave consequences of using critical Impact Aid funding to support school vouchers at a Capitol Hill briefing hosted by the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS).

The briefing was held in response to legislation introduced in Congress, H.R. 5199/S. 2158 *Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act*, which would establish Education Savings Accounts, a type of school voucher, for military dependent children by using funds from the Impact Aid program.

The Impact Aid program, one of the oldest Federal K-12 education programs, provides funds to local school districts that have lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt Federal property, or that have experienced increased costs due to the enrollment of Federally connected children, such as military connected children or children who reside on Indian lands.

Panelists provided real world examples of how school districts utilize Impact Aid funds to meet the unique needs of military dependent students and their families and provide a high-quality education for all students. District leaders underscored how redirecting Impact Aid funds into a voucher program would be financially devastating for many school districts.

Dr. Burnie Roper, Superintendent of Lackland Independent School District was one of the panelists. The small public school system he leads is located on Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas and serves a population that is 95% military- connected. Impact Aid is a major source of funding for the district; it comprises 48% of the total budget. Dr. Roper noted, “Because our district resides on federal property, we do not have a tax base and we are unable to hold bond elections. The federal government is our only taxpayer. The loss of Impact Aid funding would be devastating for our district and would most likely cause a major reduction in programs, teacher units, and possibly school closures.”

The panel also highlighted a [recent letter](#) authored by The Military Coalition, a consortium of uniformed services and veterans associations representing more than 5.5 million current and former service members and their families, opposing the voucher legislation.

Eileen Huck, Deputy Director of Government Relations for the National Military Family Association was another panelist. “Close to 80 percent of military-connected children attend local public schools in their civilian communities, many of which are heavily dependent on Impact Aid,” she said. “Draining money away from the Impact Aid program will make it difficult for schools to provide the high quality education our military kids – and all kids – need and deserve.”

“Overall, this legislation ignores the Federal government’s responsibility to provide funds to school districts whose ability to generate local revenue is limited by the presence of nontaxable Federal property. It undermines the purpose of the Impact Aid program, diverting critical funds away from school districts that rely on this funding to operate their schools on a day-to-day basis,” said Hilary Goldmann, Executive Director of the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools. “It is

unfortunate that the bill inserts partisan politics related to vouchers into one of the oldest Federal K-12 education programs that has long enjoyed bipartisan support.”

NAFIS has [estimated](#) that the bill could divert \$450 million per year from the Impact Aid program. NAFIS also describes significant new responsibilities that would be required of the U.S. Department of Education to administer the new voucher program, increasing the Federal “footprint” in K-12 education. For more information on this and to view more “questions and answers” about the bill, please click [here](#).

NAFIS is a nonprofit, nonpartisan association of school districts located across the United States. Founded more than 40 years ago, the association works to ensure the needs of the federally impacted school districts, and the children they educate, are met through adequate Federal funds.

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