



National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS)

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June 26, 2015

Dear Senator:

In advance of floor consideration of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as the “Every Child Ready for College or Career Act (ECAA) of 2015,” we write to express our views on Title VIII and potential amendments.

NAFIS represents over 1,300 Impact Aid-recipient school districts nationwide, serving over 11 million students, Federal and non-Federal. Impact Aid is the oldest elementary and secondary education program and is a partnership between local communities and the Federal government where there is significant non-taxable property, such as military installations, Indian treaty or trust land, low-rent housing facilities, national parks and laboratories. Congress recognized in 1950 that the Federal government had an obligation to help meet the local responsibility of financing public education in areas impacted by a Federal presence. That same recognition holds true today.

Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray should be commended on the bipartisan compromise bill that passed unanimously out of the HELP Committee. The ECAA is clearly the product of bipartisan input. Title VIII, Impact Aid incorporates a majority of the changes proposed by Senators Thune and Hirono in the Local Taxpayer Relief Act, S. 658. In general, the ECAA would provide greater flexibility and funding stability to federally impacted schools, facilitate timely payments, and correct several inequities in current law. Specifically, we are pleased to see the ECAA makes permanent a set of critical technical changes that were enacted via the Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act. This includes a change to the Federal Properties formula, which has already proven to speed up payments and reduce the administrative burden on school districts. In addition, the bill equally prorates Basic Support payments when dollars are sufficient to fund each school district’s “need-based” or LOT payment. The bill allows school districts to take a current-year count if Federal student enrollment increases significantly due to a Federal action (e.x. Base Realignment and Closure) or school closure. Finally, the bill updates the hold harmless to prevent a funding cliff for school districts that would experience a significant loss of funding.

In addition to the comments related to Impact Aid, NAFIS opposes school vouchers, including, those targeted specifically toward federally impacted students, like the CHOICE Act. Additionally, we oppose Title I portability. We are pleased the bill does not cap funding levels for Title programs, rather the bill allows Appropriators to determine funding levels on a year-to-year basis.

Thank you for considering our request. Please contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

John Forkenbrock
Executive Director

Jocelyn Bissonnette
Government Affairs Director