April 12, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt  The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman  Chairman
Subcommittee on L-HHS-ED  Subcommittee on L-HHS-ED
Committee on Appropriations  Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate  United States Senate

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) 2019. 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.

Impact Aid was created in 1950 because Congress recognized the Federal Government needed to accept responsibility – in areas impacted by a federal presence – by partnering with local taxpayers to help meet the local responsibility of financing public education. Impact Aid provides a payment 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 efforts to retain highly qualified teachers, adequate technology, facilities renovation, 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 and ensure appropriate funding. 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 live on Indian Lands – of which over 93 percent are Native American – 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 Properties 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 these districts 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

Mike Crapo  
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

John Barrasso, M.D.  
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

James E. Risch  
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator

Heidi Heitkamp  
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Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
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Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator