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NAFIS Opposes Elimination of Impact Aid Federal Property Program, Cuts to U.S. Department of Education

Washington, DC – March 12, 2019 – The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) strongly opposes the elimination of the Impact Aid Federal Property program and the 12 percent reduction of the U.S. Department of Education budget proposed in President Trump's FY 2020 budget request to Congress.

In addition to eliminating the Federal Property program, the budget request funds the Impact Aid Basic Support program and the other Impact Aid line items – construction, children with disabilities and facilities maintenance – at FY 2019 levels.

Impact Aid is the Federal Government's reimbursement to school districts for the presence of nontaxable Federal property (i.e. military installations, Indian Lands, Federal low-rent housing, national laboratories and grasslands). Funding appropriated annually by Congress goes directly to school districts for any general fund purpose, including academic materials, technology, staff and transportation, supporting all students. The elimination of Federal Property and what amounts to a decrease in Basic Support when considering the rising costs of education would result in cuts to personnel, social/emotional supports and the other education programming and resources that give students access to the opportunities they need to meet their full potential.

NAFIS urges Congress to reject this budget request and instead increase funding for both the Basic Support and Federal Property programs. NAFIS also urges President Trump and the Congress to work together to increase the non-defense discretionary spending cap and to invest in programs to support our nation's students.

"Students attending federally impacted schools should not be disadvantaged in their learning opportunities because there is federal non-taxable property in their school district," said NAFIS Executive Director Hilary Goldmann. "We should be investing in the future of these students, not cutting critical programs."

"Since 1950, Congress has recognized its responsibility to support schools and communities affected by a federal presence," Goldmann continued. "NAFIS calls on Congress to meet this responsibility by disregarding these proposed cuts and providing at minimum a \$2 million increase to Federal Property and a \$50 million increase to Basic Support. These increases would help to fund school districts newly eligible for Federal Property payments as a result of the federal government acquiring more land and allow the Basic Support program to match the rising costs of education."

The President’s budget request also includes “an unprecedented level of resources to promoting school choice,” with Secretary DeVos’ tuition tax credit plan. NAFIS opposes shifting public taxpayer dollars to private school voucher schemes. Such a proposal will drain dollars from the public education system and could lead to long-term deficits in Impact Aid funding.

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The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) represents the 1,200-plus federally impacted public school districts that together educate more than 10 million students across the nation. Federally impacted school districts are those located on or near nontaxable Federal property—including military installations; Indian Trust, Treaty and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act lands; Federal low-income housing facilities; and national parks, national laboratories and other Federal buildings and property. These school districts, which are demographically and geographically diverse, receive Impact Aid, a Federal education program that reimburses school districts for the lost local revenue and additional costs associated with the presence of Federal property. To learn more, visit www.nafisdc.org.