December 4, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Blunt, Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Members Murray and Cole:

The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) strongly urges you and your colleagues to make long-needed new investments in education programs and continue recognizing the obligation to federally impacted communities as you set priorities for the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

The federal government has underinvested in education in recent years, constrained by tight caps on non-defense discretionary funding. Those budget limitations led to cuts in funding for the Department of Education, where funding remained below the FY 2011 level for six years and is still $7 billion below the FY 2011 level in inflation-adjusted terms. The resulting funding cuts and freezes continue to affect vital programs along the education continuum. NAFIS urges the full Appropriations Committee to increase the education funding provided in the FY 2020 bill.

NAFIS represents the 1,200-plus Impact Aid-recipient school districts that together educate more than 10 million students across the nation. 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, Federal low-rent housing facilities, national parks and national 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.

Impact Aid appropriations have not kept pace with rising education costs, measured through the Local Contribution Rate (LCR), meaning the "purchasing power" of Impact Aid Basic Support payments is dramatically lower than it was ten years ago. Based on currently available data, we estimate that a $120 million increase would increase LOT to 100 percent. A $70 million increase to Section 7003 (Basic

Support) in FY 2020 would likely restore the LOT payout to the FY 2018 level. We request that a final FY 2020 appropriations bill include the $50 million increase found in the House-passed Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill. For Section 7002 (Federal Property), we request that you provide a $2 million increase in FY 2020 to build on these increases, as also included in the House bill.

Additional investments in education and Impact Aid are critical to help school districts educate all students, close achievement gaps, update technology, expand access to early childhood and afterschool programs, integrate culturally-relevant curriculum, replace failing infrastructure, offer competitive salaries to recruit and retain school leaders, and more. These investments help school districts provide supportive and nourishing learning environments for all students. Through increased funding, we ask you to continue to view Impact Aid as a critical federal investment and a tax replacement program for federally impacted communities.

Sincerely,

Hilary Goldmann
Executive Director

Leslie Finnan
Director of Policy & Advocacy