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NAFIS Responds to DeVos Comments on Impact Aid Federal Property Program

Washington, DC – March 6, 2020 – In a hearing before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies this week, Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO) pressed U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos on the administration's budget's elimination of Impact Aid's Federal Property section. Secretary DeVos noted that the cut was to "The part without students connected to it. I think they're mostly urban. [...] These are all, Atlanta, New York, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, and Boston."

In response to these comments, Hilary Goldmann, Executive Director of the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS), released the following statement:

"It is astonishing that after three years of budget proposals to eliminate the Impact Aid Federal Property program, the Secretary of Education continues to lack such fundamental knowledge of it. Of the nine cities Secretary DeVos listed, none receive Federal Property funding. In fact, districts receiving this funding are generally located outside of urban centers, encompassing a total of 4.7 million non-taxable federal acres.

The Federal Property section of the Impact Aid program reimburses school districts that have lost significant local revenue due to federal ownership of land – including national parks and grasslands, Army Corps of Engineers projects, military testing grounds, national laboratories, environmental waste sites and federally owned dams and reservoirs – within school district boundaries. Sixty-two of the eligible school districts have 25 percent or more of their land taken off the tax rolls by the federal government. Districts receiving Federal Property funding rely on this critical funding source to open their doors and educate students.

NAFIS calls on Congress to once again to increase funding for both the Federal Property and Basic Support sections of Impact Aid for FY 2021 to meet its obligation to federally connected school districts and the communities and students they serve."

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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 <https://www.nafisd.org/>.