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NAFIS Supports Bicameral Legislation Investing in School Infrastructure

The Impact Aid Infrastructure Act would provide \$1 billion to address the facilities needs of federally impacted school districts

Washington, DC – March 25, 2021 – The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) strongly supports legislation that invests in the facilities of federally impacted school districts. S. 945, the Impact Aid Infrastructure Act, was introduced this week by Senators Hirono (D-HI), Gillibrand (D-NY), Smith (D-MN), Klobuchar (D-MN), Baldwin (D-WI), Padilla (D-CA), Feinstein (D-CA), Heinrich (D-NM), Duckworth (D-IL), Tester (D-MT) and Blumenthal (D-CT). The legislation is a companion to H.R. 1886, which was introduced earlier this month by Representatives Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ) and Don Young (R-AK).

These bills would provide a one-time infusion of \$1 billion into the Impact Aid Construction program to address the significant backlog of infrastructure projects in these districts, which educate some of the nation's most vulnerable children.

Federally impacted school districts are 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; federally owned dams and reservoirs; and other Federal buildings and property. Because of the presence of the Federal government, these districts often have limited taxable property, minimal assessed land value or few local taxpayers. Therefore, they lack the capacity to raise funds for school construction in the way that most public school districts do – through bonds – and many lack the local resources needed to address urgent facilities' needs.

The Federal government has recognized its responsibility to provide funding to federally impacted school districts for school facilities through the Impact Aid program, which since its inception in 1950 has included funds for facility repairs and modernization to provide safe, healthy learning environments for students and staff. Currently, the Impact Aid Construction program is significantly underfunded.

A 2017 [NAFIS survey](#) identified more than \$13 billion in construction needs in 218 federally impacted school districts nationwide, including emergency repairs for health and safety – such as roof and foundation maintenance, asbestos abatement, mold remediation, plumbing repairs and addressing fire code violations – and modernization and expansion needs. Of those, \$4.2 billion was required to address the districts' most pressing need. A large majority cited lack of funds as a reason to defer these projects.

“School districts that receive funding under the Impact Aid Construction program educate some of our nation’s most vulnerable children,” said NAFIS Executive Director Hilary Goldmann. “The need to make emergency repairs and modernize buildings – many of which are more than 80 years old – in these districts is well documented. Construction funding in the Impact Aid program has been woefully inadequate for decades. This legislation is an important step in the right direction.”

In addition to established precedent for Federal investment in federally impacted school facilities, the expertise to review, distribute and monitor the proposed funding already exists within the Impact Aid Program Office at the U.S. Department of Education.

For additional information on the facilities needs of federally impacted school districts, read [*Foundations for Learning: The Facilities Needs of Federally Impacted Schools*](#) (2017).

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The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) represents the 1,100-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 grasslands, 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.