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Fern Lapidus Honored for Contributions to Impact Aid

Washington, DC – March 24, 2022 – The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) has recognized Fern Lapidus, President of Lapidus Associates and Co-Founder of NAFIS in 1973, with the Virginia Allred Stacey Founders Award. The award – the highest that NAFIS offers – was presented at the 2022 NAFIS Spring Conference.

Lapidus was honored for her leadership, dedication and service to the Impact Aid community and the students we serve. Impact Aid reimburses school districts for the loss of revenue caused by the presence of nontaxable Federal property, including military installations; Indian Trust, Treaty and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act lands; Federal low-income housing; and national parks, national laboratories and other Federal buildings and property. It helps ensure students who attend schools on or near Federal property have access to a quality education.

Lapidus, who began her career as a teacher in New York City Public Schools, came to Washington, DC, in the 1970s to represent the school district before Congress, the Administration, U.S. Department of Education and other education associations. At the time, Impact Aid was an important component of the school district's funding due to the large number of students it served who resided in Federal low-rent housing facilities. Lapidus soon learned that there was no coherent organization advocating on behalf of all the Impact Aid program's various interests. Working alongside key players from other federally connected districts, she served as the catalyst that formed what is now NAFIS. Her concerted outreach to the entire Impact Aid community developed a unified voice and moved the Impact Aid program forward.

Lapidus served on the NAFIS Board of Directors for years. When the New York school system closed their DC office, she continued her efforts to strengthen Impact Aid. She worked closely with Los Alamitos Unified School District (CA) to unify and organize school districts eligible for Impact Aid Section 7002 Federal Property in California, providing a strong voice for funding and program improvements.

"Fern's leadership has been critical to the ensuring the strength of the Impact Aid program over the past several decades," said Interim Executive Director John Forkenbrock. "Without her, NAFIS would not exist and Impact Aid would look entirely different – and might have fallen prey to past budget cuts. Because of her efforts, students in federally impacted school districts across the country have access to opportunities and resources they need. I am proud that NAFIS is recognizing her with this award for her exceptional work."

The entire NAFIS Family joins together in thanking Fern Lapidus for her work to strengthen and protect Impact Aid.

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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 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.nafisd.org.