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Bipartisan Bill Seeks Major Investment in School Infrastructure

NAFIS strongly supports legislation to address urgent facility needs in federally impacted school districts

Washington, DC – April 3, 2025 – The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) strongly supports new bipartisan legislation that addresses the critical infrastructure needs of federally impacted school districts. The **Impact Aid Infrastructure Partnership Act (IAIPA)**—led by Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA), and Rep. Jay Obernolte (R-CA)—was introduced today to provide a much-needed investment in school construction and modernization.

The bill allocates \$250 million annually for four years to the Impact Aid Construction program, targeting the significant backlog of infrastructure projects in federally impacted school districts. These districts educate nearly eight million students and 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; and national parks, national laboratories, and other federal buildings and property.

Unlike most public school districts, federally impacted districts cannot rely on local tax revenue to fund major capital projects. Although the Impact Aid Construction program has been in place since 1950, chronic underfunding has left many school facilities in urgent need of repair, modernization, and replacement. Notably, the IAIPA also allows funds to be used for teacher housing construction and renovation.

"The Impact Aid Infrastructure Partnership Act represents a vital commitment to the future of federally impacted school districts," said NAFIS Executive Director Nicole Russell. "These districts serve a high number of military children, Native American children, and children residing in low-income housing, all of whom have unique educational needs. Yet, due to federal land ownership, they struggle to fund essential school infrastructure projects. The federal government has a responsibility to ensure these students learn in safe, modern facilities—environments that foster their academic success and personal growth."

NAFIS President Quincy Natay, Superintendent of Chinle Unified School District #24 (AZ), underscored the financial challenges faced by these districts and the urgency of this legislation. "Many federally impacted schools struggle to maintain and upgrade facilities due to unique funding constraints, as their property is nontaxable. This lack of local revenue makes it difficult to address aging infrastructure, modernize classrooms, and create safe, effective learning environments. The Impact Aid Infrastructure Partnership Act would be a transformative solution, providing much-needed resources to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, have access to high-quality school facilities."

He also highlighted the importance of teacher housing, noting that "in districts on Indian lands, teacher housing is not just a convenience—it is a critical school facility. Without adequate housing, recruiting and retaining educators becomes a significant challenge, directly impacting student learning and school stability. Increased

investment in Impact Aid Construction would allow districts like Chinle to build and maintain teacher housing, ensuring that our schools can attract and keep the dedicated educators that students deserve.”

NAFIS Board Member Hilary Bales, Superintendent of Waynesville R-VI School District (MO), which serves from Fort Leonard Wood (FLW), emphasized the need for action. “Our district, like many federally impacted schools, faces aging infrastructure, and we know that school facilities play a crucial role in student success. Put simply, this is a quality-of-life issue. Because of the inability to tax federal lands, federally impacted schools often have a backlog of much-needed critical repairs. The Impact Aid Infrastructure Partnership Act would provide construction funds that would make substantial progress in addressing urgent needs.”

She also explained how the legislation would directly benefit her district. “In our case, IAIPA funds would allow us to replace a boarded-up school on the FLW military installation that has fallen into such disrepair. This new building would allow us to provide a better environment geared toward students with special needs and expand preschool offerings. IAIPA is critical, not just for our district, but for federally impacted schools nationwide.”

With bipartisan backing, the IAIPA represents a crucial step toward ensuring that all students—regardless of where they live—have access to quality school facilities. NAFIS urges Congress to act swiftly and pass this legislation, ensuring that the federal government upholds its commitment to students, families, and schools in communities where it holds land.

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The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) represents more than 1,000 federally impacted public school districts that together educate nearly eight 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 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.