



October 27, 2025

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murkowski, Chair Westerman, Ranking Member Schatz, and Ranking Member Huffman:

On behalf of the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) and the National Indian Impacted Schools Association (NIISA), we write to express our deep concern about the recent reduction-in-force (RIF) of nearly all staff within the U.S. Department of Education's Impact Aid Program Office. We recognize that the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and the House Committee on Natural Resources do not have direct jurisdiction over the Department of Education or the Impact Aid Program. However, given your leadership on issues affecting Native communities, we respectfully request that you express to the Department and the Office of Management and Budget your concern about how these staffing losses threaten the timely and effective delivery of Impact Aid funds to school districts serving Native students.

Over 90 percent of Native American students attend local public schools, many of which rely on Impact Aid to provide essential educational services. Impact Aid compensates districts for the loss of local tax revenue due to the presence of federal and tribal lands and for the additional costs associated with educating federally connected children, including those residing on or near Indian lands.

Impact Aid is a federal obligation, born of treaties, trust responsibility, and the unique status of tribal lands as non-taxable. In the United States Code, Impact Aid's statutory purpose acknowledges a need to provide financial assistance to local school districts to, in part, "fulfill the responsibilities of the Federal Government with respect to Indian tribes" (20

U.S.C. 7701). The program is a critical lifeline for Native communities, ensuring that schools serving their students have the resources to provide equitable, high-quality education that honors and supports their cultural and community connections.

The combined effects of the government shutdown and the RIF have left the Impact Aid Program's ability to process applications, issue payments, and communicate with districts in jeopardy. Many school districts serving Native students depend on timely Impact Aid payments to meet payroll, maintain operations, and support programs that reflect and sustain Native languages, traditions, and values. They were anticipating initial payments in October that they have not received and urgently need. Once the government reopens, it is critical that they get payments as soon as possible – but without the Impact Aid staff in place, it is unclear how the program will function. Any further delay in payments or breakdown in communication threatens to harm students, families, and communities that already face unique educational and economic challenges.

Your voices carry significant weight in ensuring that federal agencies understand the implications of these actions on Native students and communities. We urge you to communicate to the Department of Education and OMB the importance of restoring staffing capacity in the Impact Aid Office and ensuring the continued functioning of this critical program, particularly during this period of federal disruption.

We appreciate your commitment to improving educational opportunities for Native students and families, and we thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Cherise Imai
Executive Director
National Association of Federally
Impacted Schools (NAFIS)



Brent Gish
Executive Director
National Indian Impacted Schools
Association (NIISA)