United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 26, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on L-HHS-ED
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on L-HHS-ED
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We urge you to recognize the importance of the Federal Impact Aid Program as you set the Appropriation Subcommittee's funding priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. We appreciate the program was made a priority in the FY 2014 omnibus appropriations legislation and received funding to nearly restore the program to its pre-sequestration funding levels. We fully recognize the fiscal restraint that will govern the Subcommittee's actions this year, but we request strong and continued funding for all line items of the Impact Aid Program to ensure all federally connected school districts can provide a quality education.

Impact Aid was created in 1950 because Congress recognized the Federal Government needed to accept responsibility – in areas impacted by a federal presence – by partnering with local taxpayers to help meet the local responsibility of financing public education. Impact Aid provides a payment in lieu of taxes to local school districts for lost revenue that is a result of tax-exempt federal property and actions that have increased expenditures due to the enrollment of federally connected children. The program provides direct, flexible funding to over 1,300 school districts. Impact Aid funds a range of programs, including programs to retain highly qualified teachers, adequate technology, facilities renovation, and maintenance of transportation fleets. For many districts, this funding represents the very lifeblood that allows their school systems to operate.

For districts enrolling military children, the ability to address both the academic and emotional needs of these students must be maintained. Education is a quality-of-life issue for military families, and it is our firm belief that as military personnel defend our country we must not forget or ignore the children they leave behind.

The needs of districts enrolling Indian Land children – of which over 93 percent are Native American – also must not be overlooked. These districts strive to find creative ways to integrate curriculum and best practices to prepare students for success. Often, these school districts are located in rural areas with few taxpayers and where administrators double as bus drivers, teachers, and coaches. These dollars provide a foundational education program for all students; many schools would close their doors without the support of Impact Aid.

The Administration's FY 2016 budget proposal recommends the elimination of funding for Section 8002 (Federal Properties) for the fourth year in a row, despite continued support from Congress for the program. Federal Properties school districts depend on Impact Aid due to a limited local tax base

caused by the presence of certain federal land in their districts, including national parks and grasslands, national laboratories, Army Corps of Engineering projects, and property that encompasses the military academies. In some of these communities, the Federal Government is the largest landowner, which significantly diminishes a school district's revenue base.

We realize the Subcommittee will be working under significant budget constraints, but we urge you to support continued funding for the entire Impact Aid Program. While the restoration of funding in FY 2014 was welcome relief for these school districts, the potential of long-term funding stagnation is of serious concern given the changing needs of the program and the students these districts serve. Impact Aid is not only the Federal Government's obligation, but also a tax relief program for local communities. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

John Barrasso
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Al Franken
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Kirsten Gillibrand
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Martin Heinrich
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United States Senator

John Hoeven
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Johnny Isakson
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Tim Kaine
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Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
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Richard J. Durbin
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Deb Fischer
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Gary C. Peters
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