

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 14, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
Room S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
Room S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S-128, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S-128, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As Congress continues to consider emergency relief funding to respond to the continuing public health emergency caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19 or the virus), we urge you to recognize the importance of the Federal Impact Aid Program and provide a one-time supplemental investment to assist federally impacted school districts during the pandemic. School districts who receive funding from the Impact Aid program, educate some of our most vulnerable student populations, including Native American and military connected children and children living in federal low-rent housing, are less resourced than non-federally impacted school districts to respond to the challenges caused by this pandemic.

Congress created the Impact Aid program in 1950 in recognition that the federal government needed to accept responsibility in areas impacted by a federal presence and 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 1,200 school districts. Impact Aid funds a range of programs, including facilities renovation, efforts to retain highly qualified teachers, adequate technology, and maintenance of transportation fleets. For many districts, this funding represents the very lifeblood that allows their school system to operate.

Federally impacted 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 Engineers 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. The next COVID-19

response legislation should prioritize this funding stream in order to help alleviate expected state funding cuts to avoid lay-offs and spur the economic recovery in their communities. The funds will also ensure that these school districts have the help they need as they transition to online learning, meet the social and emotional needs of students, provide wrap-around services, and replace failing infrastructure. Specifically, funding for Impact Aid should include robust funding for:

- Section 7003 –to fully fund the Basic Support Program to ensure that federally impacted districts are able cover the gaps in funding compared to non-federally impacted districts and enable them to respond to costs associated with the virus;
- Section 7003(d) – to support children with disabilities during the pandemic by increasing payments for students with an active Individualized Education Program (IEP); and
- Section 7002 – Federal Property to support districts with non-taxable federal lands respond and recover from the virus and mitigate potential state and local funding gaps.

We must not forget about our most vulnerable student populations during this pandemic. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

James E. Risch
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Krysten Sinema
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator