

ORAL PROPONENT testimony for SB 87- Expanding student eligibility under the tax credit for low income students scholarship program, increasing the amount of the tax credit for contributions made pursuant to such program and providing for aggregate tax credit limit increases under certain conditions.

NAME: Jesus Lucero

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TO: Chairwomen Representative Estes and members of the House Education Committee

The benefits I have gained from attending Catholic schools are immeasurable. Having experienced both public and Catholic schools, I can confidently say that the friendships I have formed in Catholic school are among the deepest and most meaningful. This is one of the greatest advantages of attending Catholic schools—the strong sense of fellowship and community. Many of my closest friends today are people I met through Catholic school.

Another significant benefit is the education, particularly the lessons I've learned about history, especially Church history. Catholic school has also taught me the importance of empathy—how to put myself in others' shoes and listen to differing viewpoints, even when they contradict my own beliefs. This brings me to a third benefit—the central role of faith in Catholic schools. While all of us share a common belief in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we also embrace the diversity of thought within our community. This environment has helped me learn to listen to others, even when their ideas seem unconventional or I disagree with them.

One of my best friends, Ambrose, exemplifies this attitude of love and respect, even for those with whom we may strongly disagree, or for people society often overlooks, such as homeless individuals selling CDs in a parking lot. Ambrose embodies what many would consider "holiness" by striving to live out the best version of what God calls him to be.

Lastly, the practice of prayer and daily Mass is one of the greatest benefits of attending Catholic school. While many may take these opportunities for granted, I believe they should be the most important part of our day. Catholic schools are unique in offering daily prayer and Mass, which has helped me connect with others who prioritize these practices. The people I've met through daily Mass and prayer are among the best I know.

Thank you, and God bless.