



Urban Institute

Colorado At-Risk Study: Interim Update



Introduction

- The Urban Institute is a non-partisan non-profit research organization based in Washington D.C.



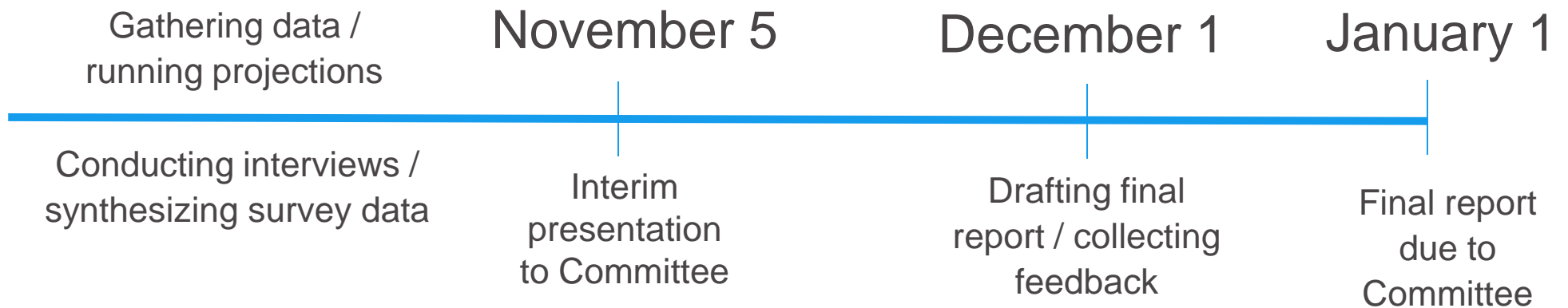
Presentation Contents

- Overview
- Survey & Interview Findings
- Perspectives from Research & Policy
- At-Risk Measure Alternatives
- Next Steps

October Progress

- We received more than 100 responses to our stakeholder survey.
- In addition, we have held individual interviews with more than 25 individual stakeholders and organizations.
- We're continuing to schedule interviews as needed.
- We wish to thank those who have generously given us their time, either in filling out the survey or in interviews.

Timeline



Important Terms

- **Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) Eligible:** Students who are income-eligible for free or reduced price meals through direct certification, categorical eligibility, or application.
- **Direct Certification:** FRPL-eligible through participation in SNAP or TANF
- **Categorical Eligibility:** FRPL-eligible through student classification as homeless, foster, or migrant.
- **Identified Student Percentage (ISP):** Eligible through direct certification plus categorical eligibility

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Initial Survey and Interview Results

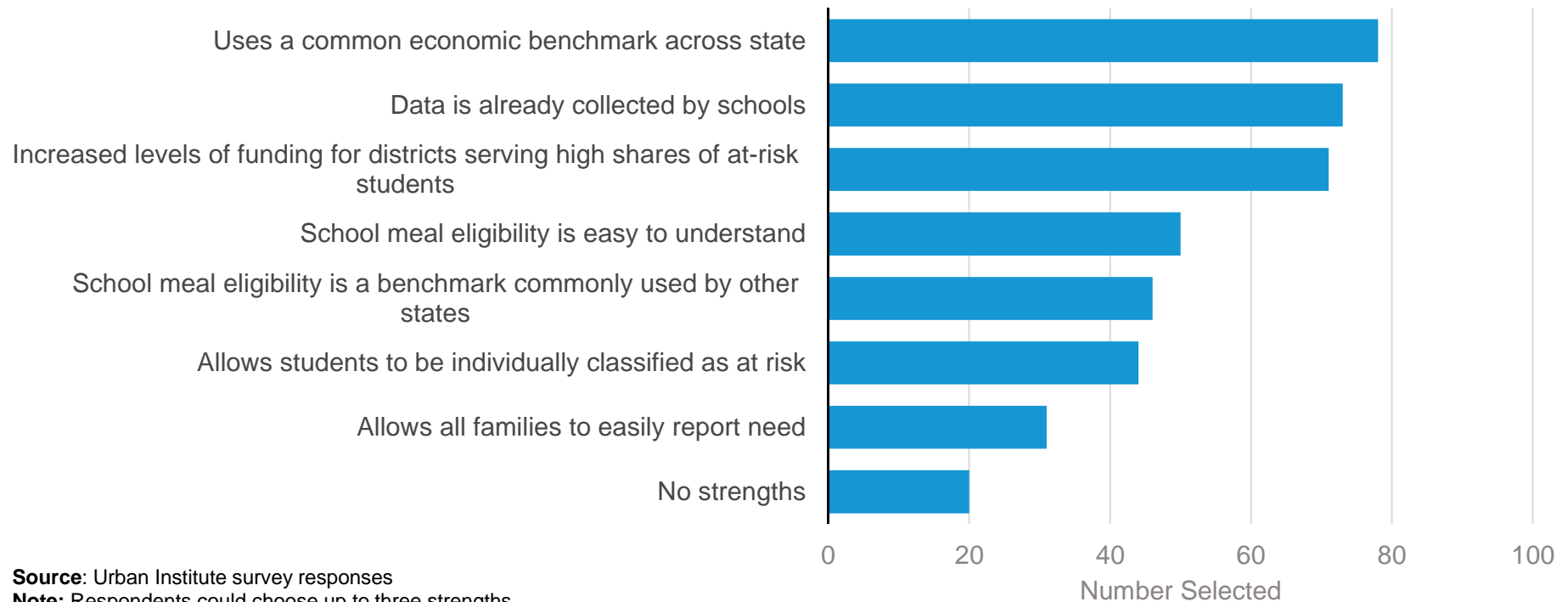
Satisfaction with Current At-Risk Measure

- We received survey responses from many perspectives, including school and district leaders, advocates, and government stakeholders.
- **62 percent** of those who responded were “strongly” or “somewhat” dissatisfied with the current at-risk measure (27 percent “strongly”).
- **25 percent** were “strongly” or “somewhat” satisfied (5 percent “strongly”).

Survey Data - Strengths

What would you identify as key strengths of the current at-risk measure?

All respondents



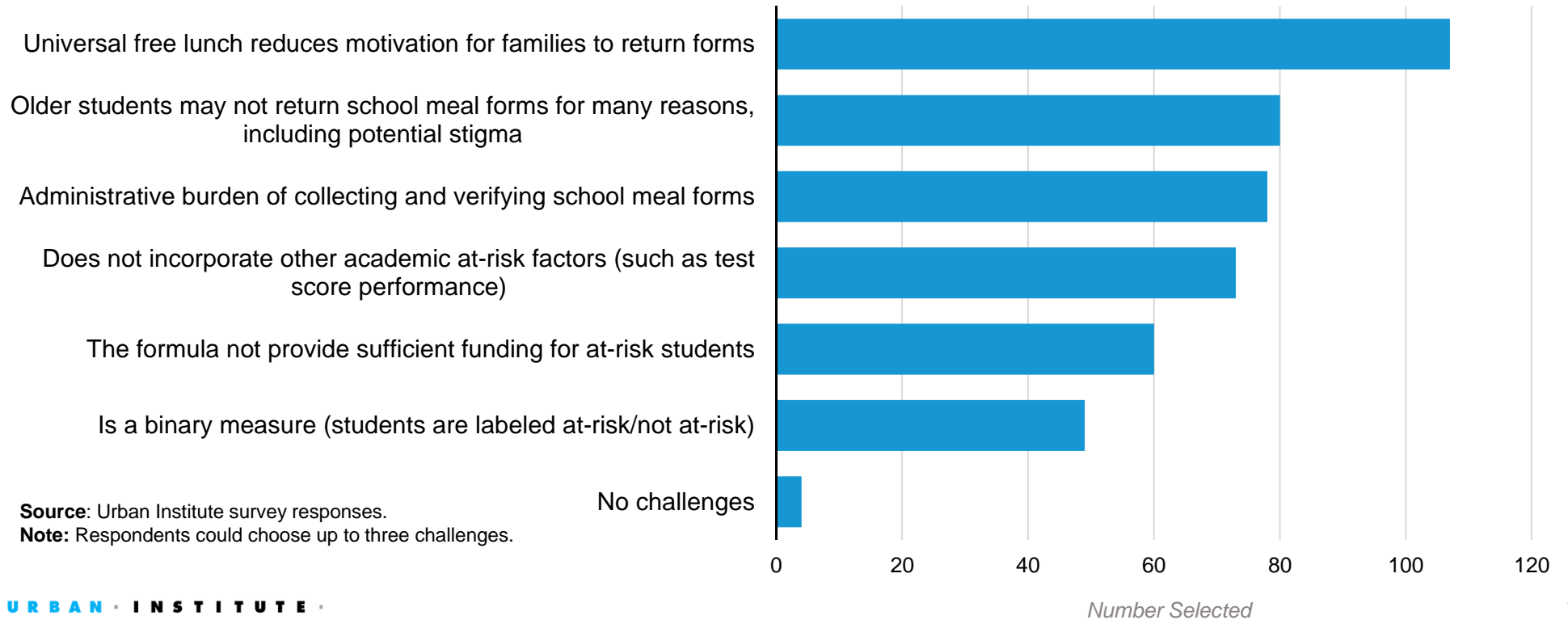
Source: Urban Institute survey responses

Note: Respondents could choose up to three strengths.

Survey Data - Challenges

What would you identify as key challenges of the current at-risk measure?

All respondents



Source: Urban Institute survey responses.

Note: Respondents could choose up to three challenges.

Survey Data (at-risk measure preference)

- Stakeholders were asked to rank replacement at-risk measures:
 - Direct certification
 - Direct certification with a Medicaid link
 - Geographic poverty shares
 - Socio-economic data
 - **Alternative income forms**

Interview Findings

Stakeholders expressed that:

- Changing the at-risk measure should be accompanied by increased funding
- Many schools are held back from taking up universal meals through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) because of the funding formula
- Collection of FRPL forms creates administrative burden for schools, especially in a universal free lunch environment
- The current at-risk measure, and other measures, may still be an under-count or under-assessment of student need

Perspective From Research & Policy

Universal free lunch eligibility provides substantial benefits for students

Adopting CEP:

- **increases test score performance** (Ruffini 2018, Gordanier et al 2019, Schwartz and Rothbart 2019)
- **reduces suspension rates** (Gordon and Ruffini 2018)
- **increases the share of students with a healthy BMI** (Davis and Musaddiq 2018)

Increasing K12 funding for at-risk students could produce short- and long-run gains

Increases in K12 student funding are associated with:

- **Increases in standardized test scores** (Lafortune, Rothstein and Schanzenbach 2016)
- **Increases in high school graduation rates** (Candelaria and Shores 2017).
- **Increases in post-secondary enrollment** (Hyman 2014)
- **Higher earnings among children from poor families** (Jackson, Johnson, and Persico 2014).

Proposed federal changes could make universal free lunch more accessible for districts and for Colorado

Just 4% of Colorado students are enrolled in a CEP school

- CEP reimbursement multiplier from 1.6 to 2.5 (July 2022 to July 2026)
- From 40 to 25 percent ISP threshold for CEP
- Opt-in for statewide CEP

At-Risk Alternatives

Alternative at-risk measures

▪ Direct
Certification &
Medicaid/CHP+

▪ Census
Poverty
Estimates
(SAIPE)

Neighborhood
SES Estimates

School
Neighborhood
Poverty (EDGE)

Household Tax
Data

Alternative
Income Forms

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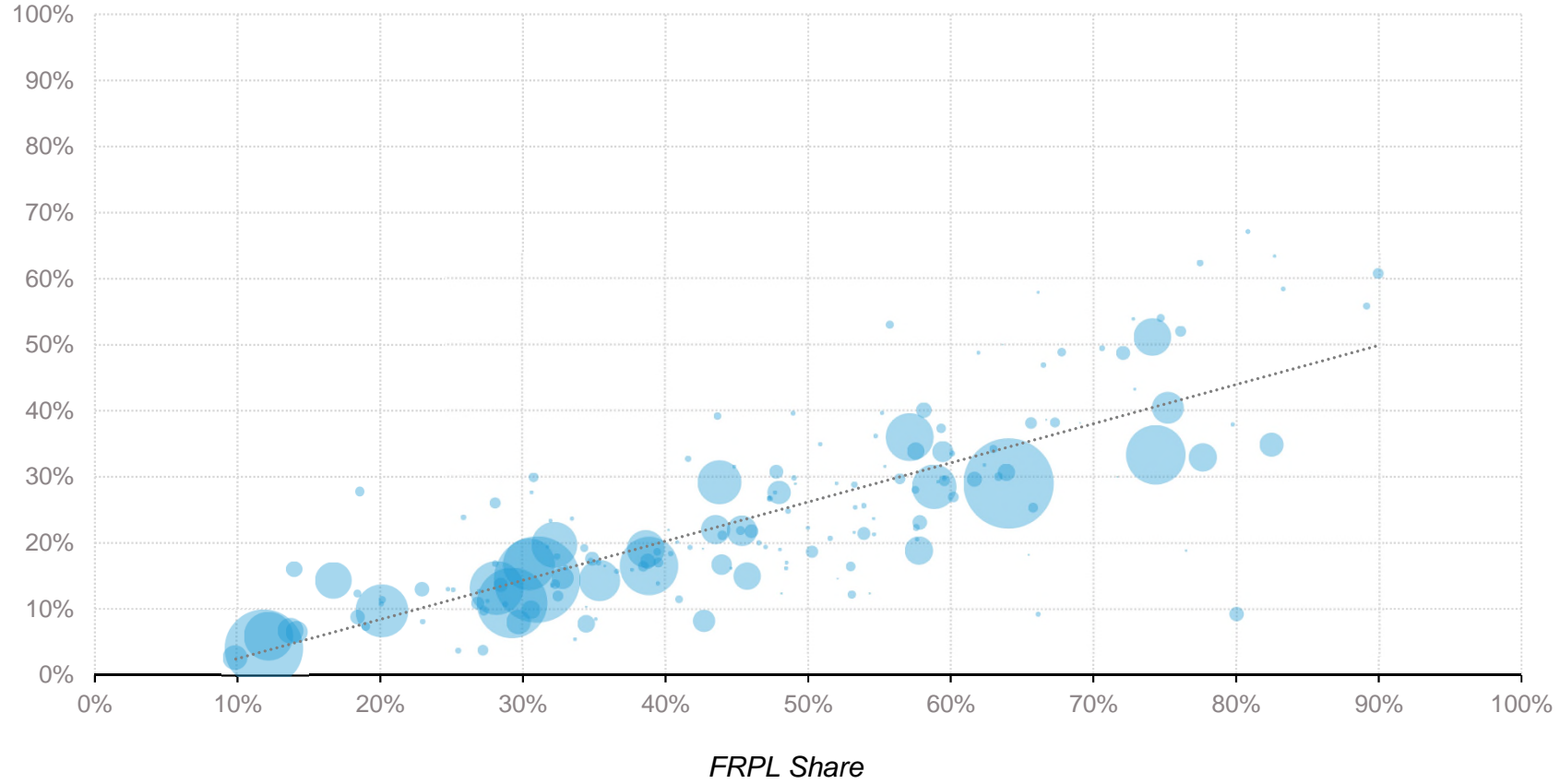
Alternative
Income Forms

Direct Certification & Medicaid/CHP+

- Eligible children are certified for free meals if they are participating in one or more means-tested federal assistance program (SNAP, TANF, FDPIR).
 - Medicaid/CHP+ could be added under a Direct Certification Demonstration project
- Challenges:
 - Can't capture students whose families do not participate in social safety net programs
- Transition:
 - Schools already collect these data, and could be combined with categorical data on students classified as migrant, homeless, or foster (the state identified student percentage, or ISP)
 - Next deadline for Medicaid Direct Certification Demonstration project is September 30, 2022 for AY 2023-24

Direct Certification

Direct Certification Share

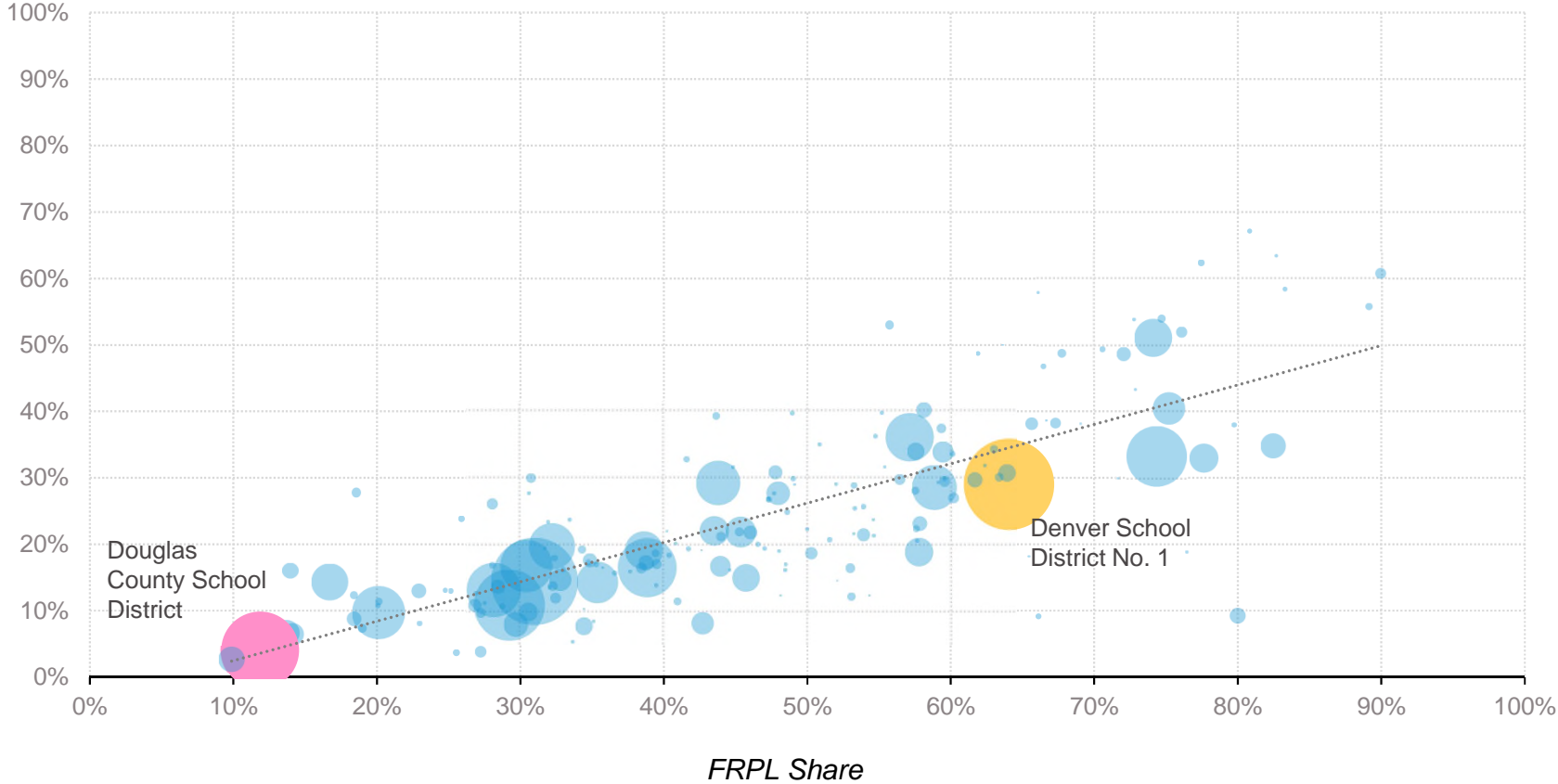


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BK1 Add in context districts
Blagg, Kristin, 11/2/2021

Direct Certification

Direct Certification Share

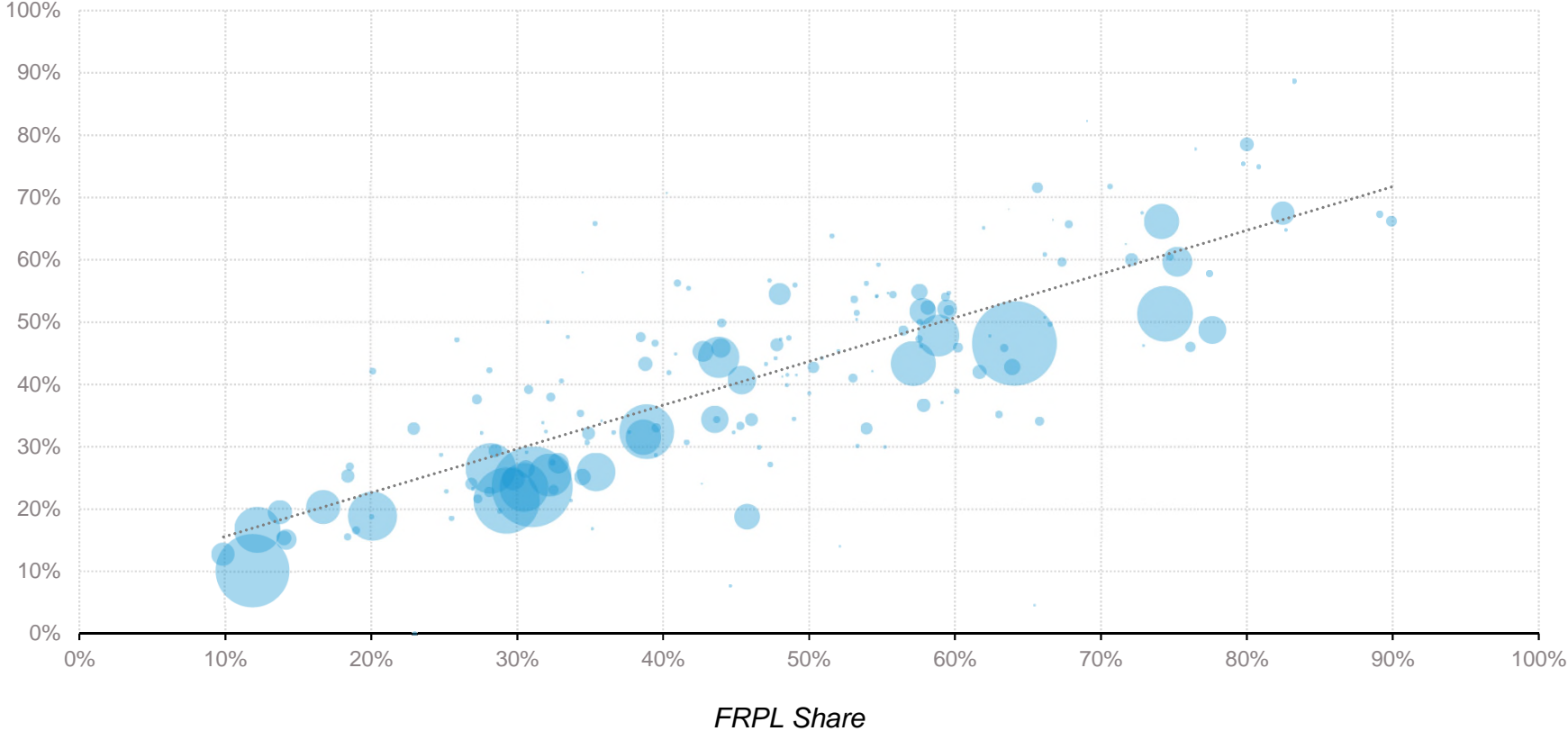


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Medicaid/CHP+

Share Participating in Medicaid/CHP+

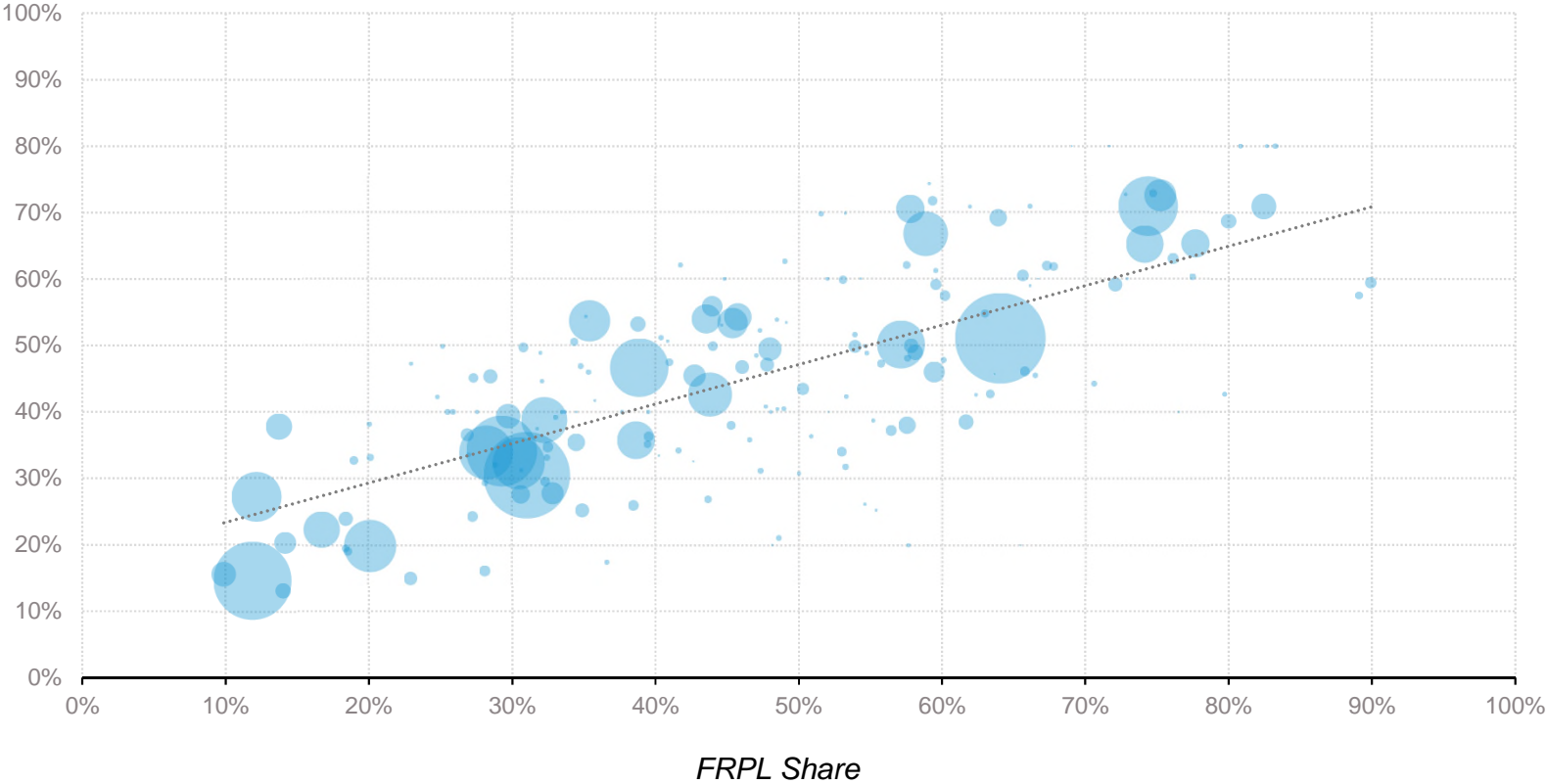


Census-Based Data

- Neighborhood Characteristics: students are linked to a Census block group
 - Neighborhood Index using American Community Survey data can capture important and targeted community elements
 - Test Index: *Non-English language spoken at home, foster/raised by relative, median household income, home ownership, bachelor's degree attainment*
- Challenges:
 - This process would require districts to identify student location in Census block groups
- Transition:
 - Choosing ACS variables for inclusion
 - Use as a supplement to an existing measure

Census-Based Data

Neighborhood Index - Implied Share At-Risk

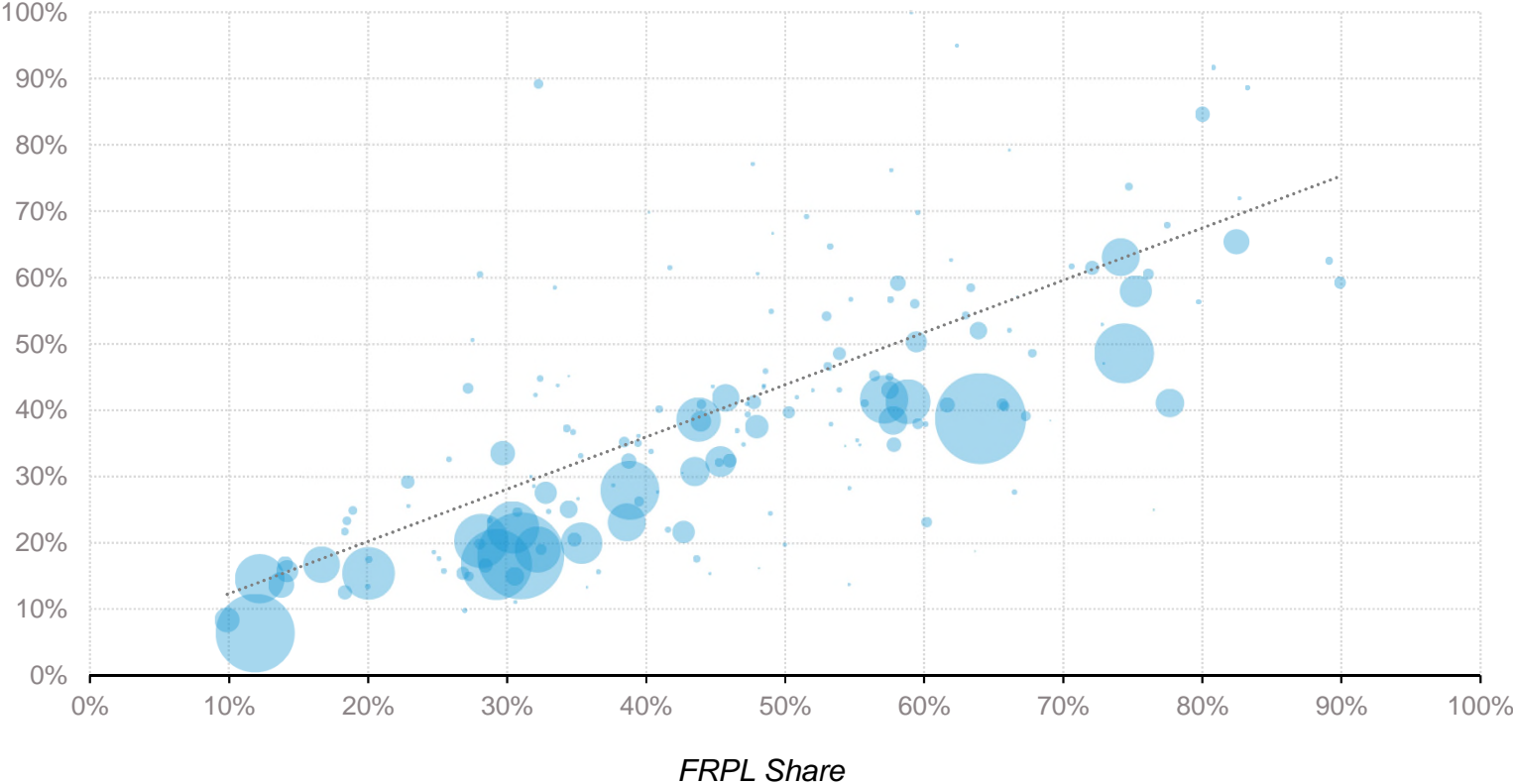


Income Tax Data

- Student links to household state tax data to recover students at or below a given poverty threshold (or combination of thresholds)
- Challenges:
 - Build a data sharing connection to Department of Revenue, return data in aggregate to CDE
- Transition:
 - Need for potential carve-out in code
 - Supplement with Census block data for non-filers

Income Tax Data

Share 185% FPL



Next Steps

Next Steps: Assessing Combinations of Measures

- Direct Certification + Neighborhood Characteristics
- Direct Certification + Medicaid + Neighborhood Characteristics
- Income Tax Match + Neighborhood Characteristics

- How to adjust weight/dollar amount allocated per at-risk student
- Hold harmless & adjustment to new measure