



Joint School Funding Legislative Commission Meeting

Tuesday, November 12



Meeting Objectives

- 1) Re-visit the challenges of the current system and how a student weighted formula could address these challenges.
- 2) Present examples of what an Alabama-specific student weighted model could look like and get feedback from commission members.

Agenda

- 1) **Challenges: What are the challenges with our current formula?** *Chairman Arthur Orr and Chairman Danny Garrett*
- 2) **How could we address these challenges? A Student Weighted Formula** - *Jennifer Schiess, Bellwether*
- 3) **Can Alabama afford to transition to a new formula?** *Kirk Fulford, LSA*
- 4) **Models: What could a new Alabama student weighted formula look like?** *Alex Spurrier, Bellwether*
- 5) **Accountability** - *Jennifer Schiess, Bellwether*

Overview of Process

- No decisions have been made. The models you will see today are a starting point for discussion.
- Today is about learning more about what's possible.
- The Legislative Commission will help us think through the decision-making process.

Commission Meeting 1

May 21, 11-1 pm

Overview of Foundation Program

Commission Meeting 2

August 15, 11-1 pm

Overview of Challenges with FP & Benefits of a Student Weighted Formula

Commission Meeting 3

November 12, 11-1 pm

Present example models to Commission & request feedback

Commission Meeting 4

TBD

Review Report

What are the challenges with our current system?

Chairman Arthur Orr and
Chairman Danny Garrett

Alabama's current school funding system creates challenges for school districts and policymakers.

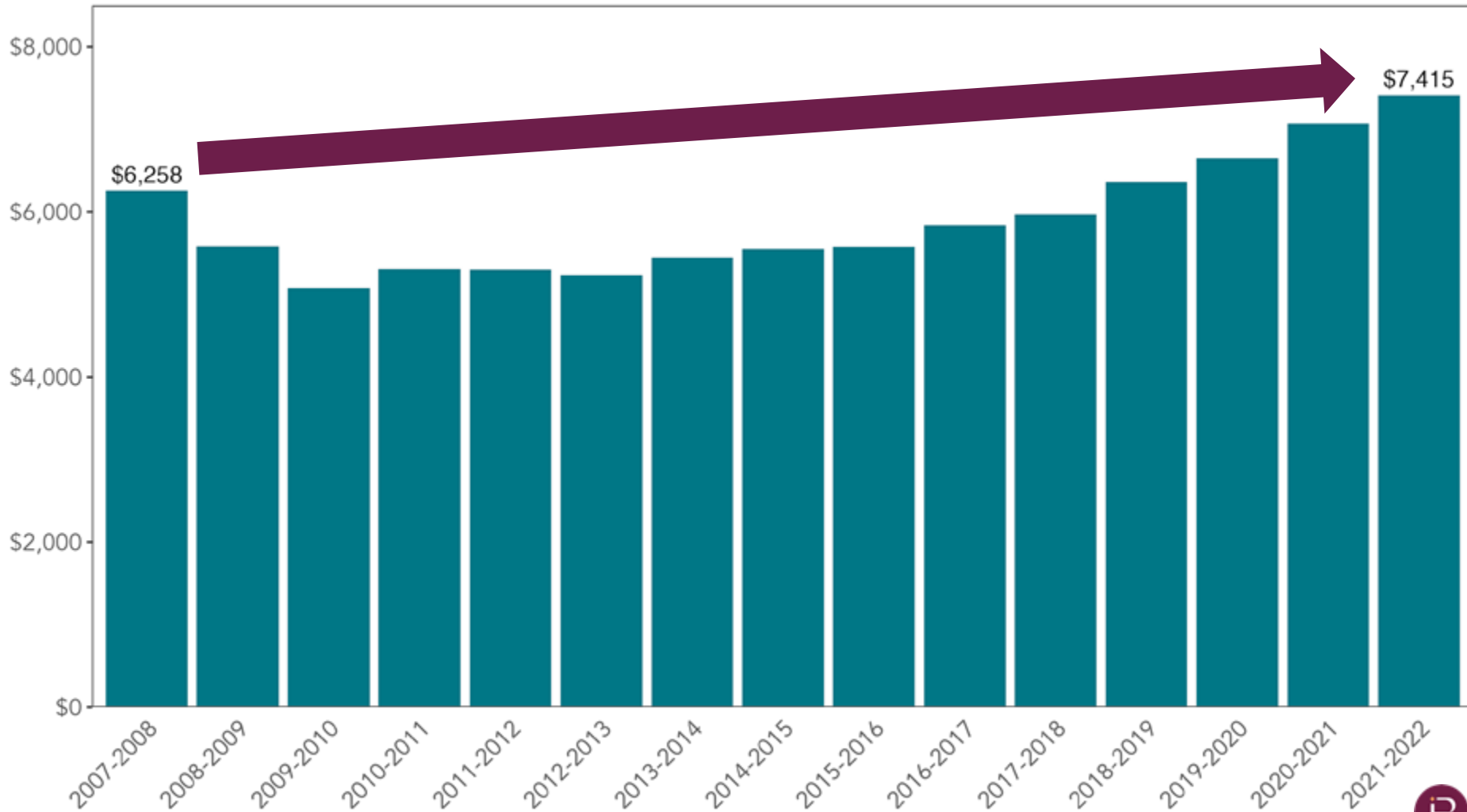
- **Outdated**: We haven't changed our formula in over 30 years.
 - We need to adjust our formula to address 21st century needs and to keep up with the rest of the country.
- **Doesn't address student needs**: Our current formula does not sufficiently address student needs.
 - Research shows that students that have greater educational needs (i.e. ELL, students with disabilities, students in poverty) require more support to meet academic goals, requiring greater investment of resources.

Alabama's current school funding system creates challenges for school districts and policymakers.

- **Under-resourced**: Alabama's current approach to school funding lags behind most states; peer states have acted to address similar shortcomings.
- **Inefficient**: The Foundation Program and At-Risk funding do not effectively target funding to meet student needs.
 - Current state funding through the Foundation Program is poorly correlated with student need.
 - At-Risk funding per-pupil is correlated with poverty rates, but funding levels are minimal – the equivalent of less than a **1% weight for poverty**.
- **Inflexible**: The Foundation Program is highly prescriptive and limits the ability of local leaders to direct funding to best meet student needs.

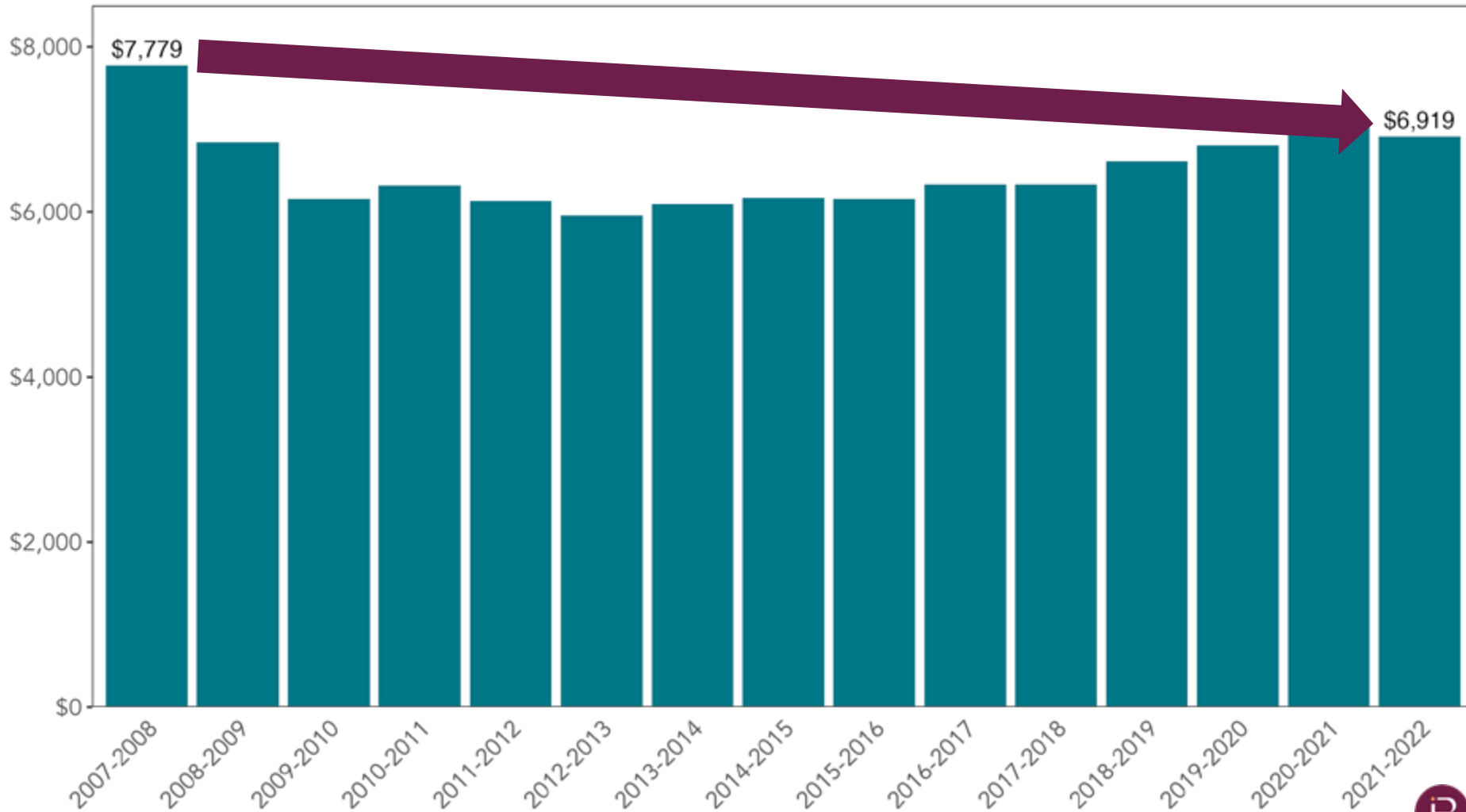
In raw dollars, state funding in Alabama increased by more than \$1,100 per student from 2007-08 to 2021-22

Alabama State Per-Pupil Funding, 2007-08 to 2021-22



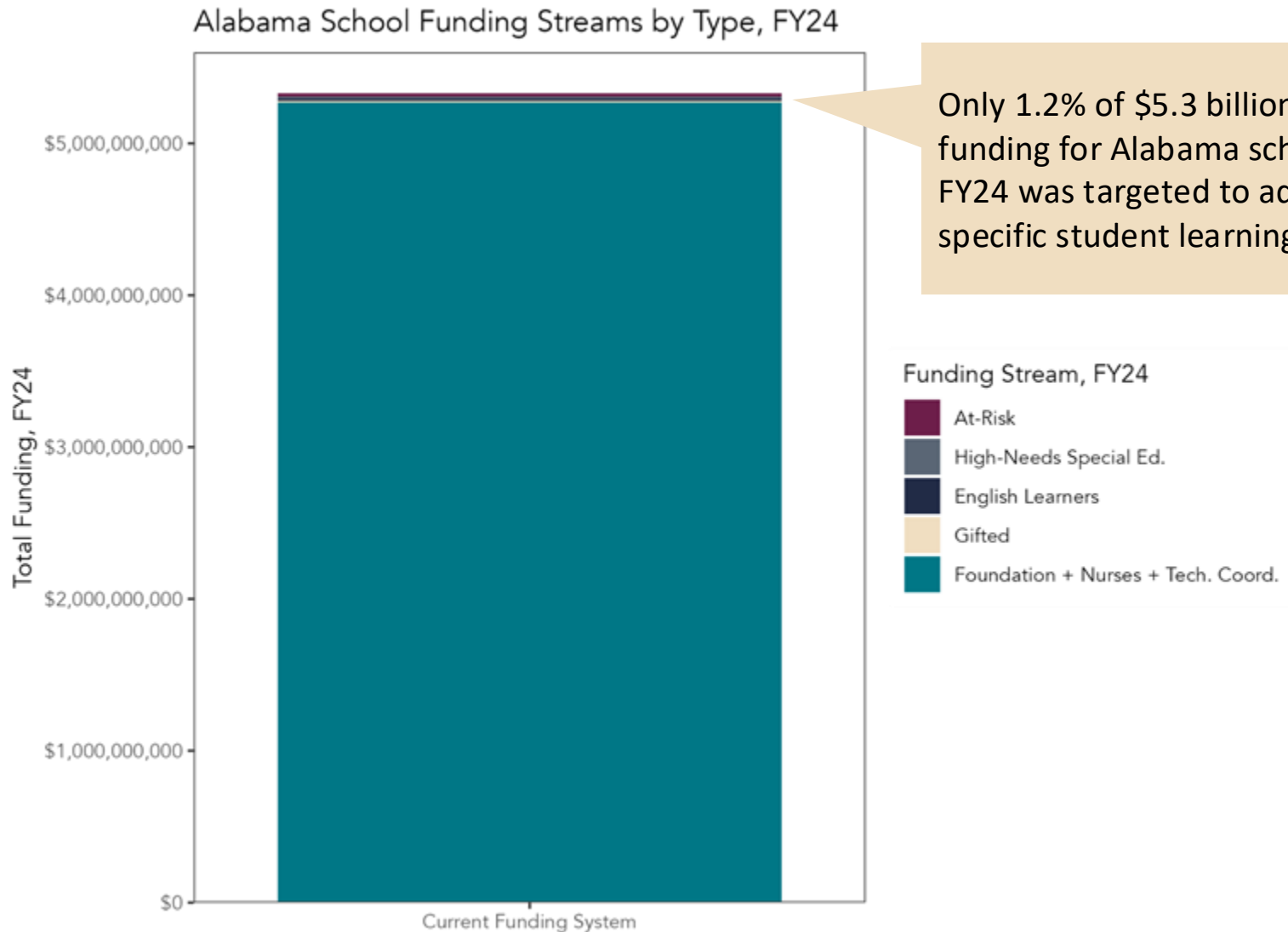
But after adjusting for inflation, Alabama's state funding *decreased* by \$860 per student from 2007-08 to 2020-22

Alabama State Per-Pupil Funding in 2021 dollars, 2007-08 to 2021-22



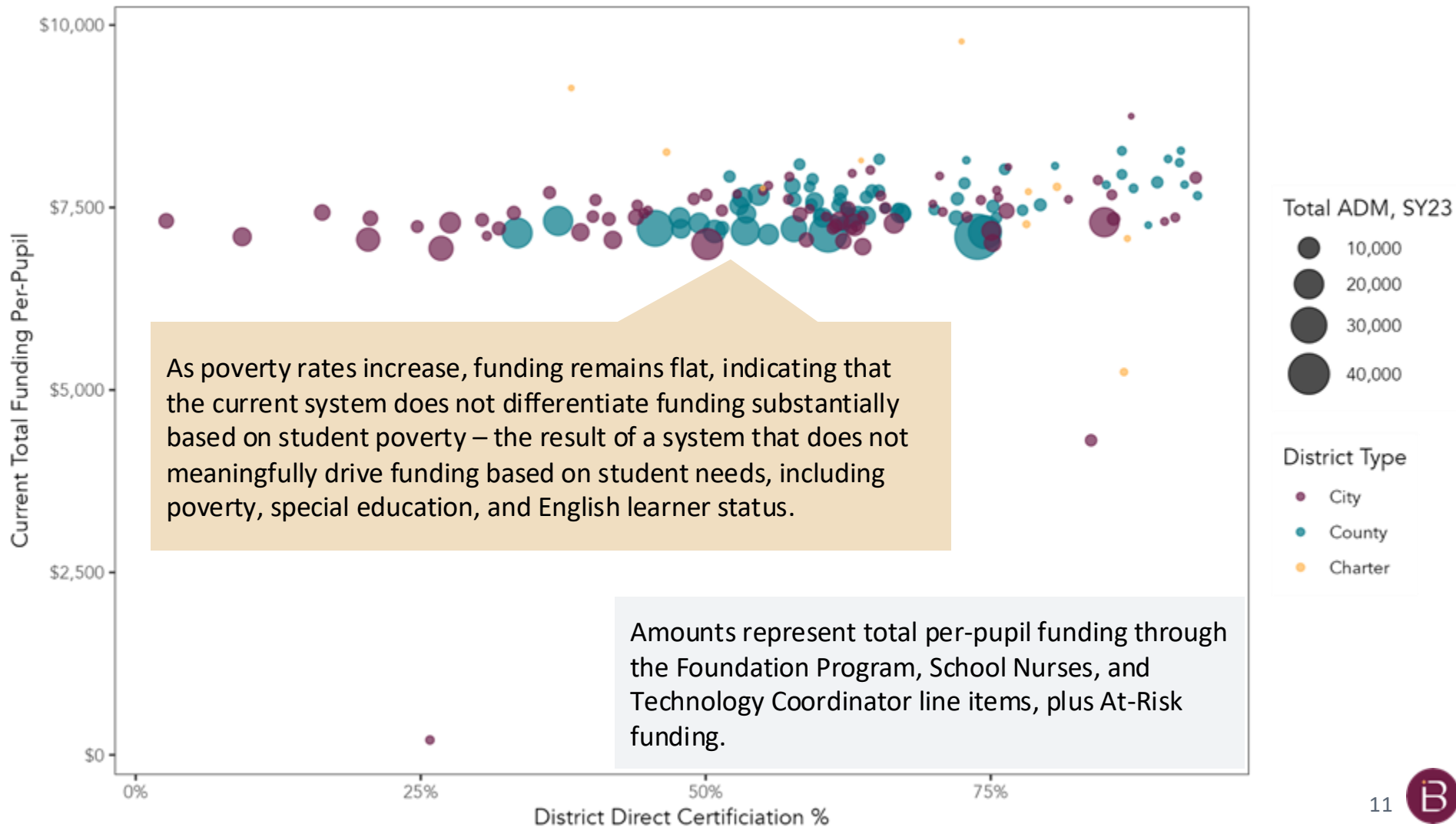
Source: U.S. Census Bureau; All calculations have been adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index and converted into constant 2021 U.S. dollars.

Alabama's current school funding system directs relatively little funding to support student needs



Alabama's current school funding system does not drive meaningfully different funding by student needs

Current Total Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty



Alabama's current funding system significantly influences how districts build their budgets

One-Size-Fits-All Budget Influence

The current foundation program's calculations for staff "units" significantly influences how local districts allocate the largest part of their budget: personnel.

Constraints on Local Leadership

Line items for student materials, technology, library enhancement, professional development, and textbooks are directed by state funding allocations, not local district priorities.

A student-weighted formula would help us to address each of these challenges.

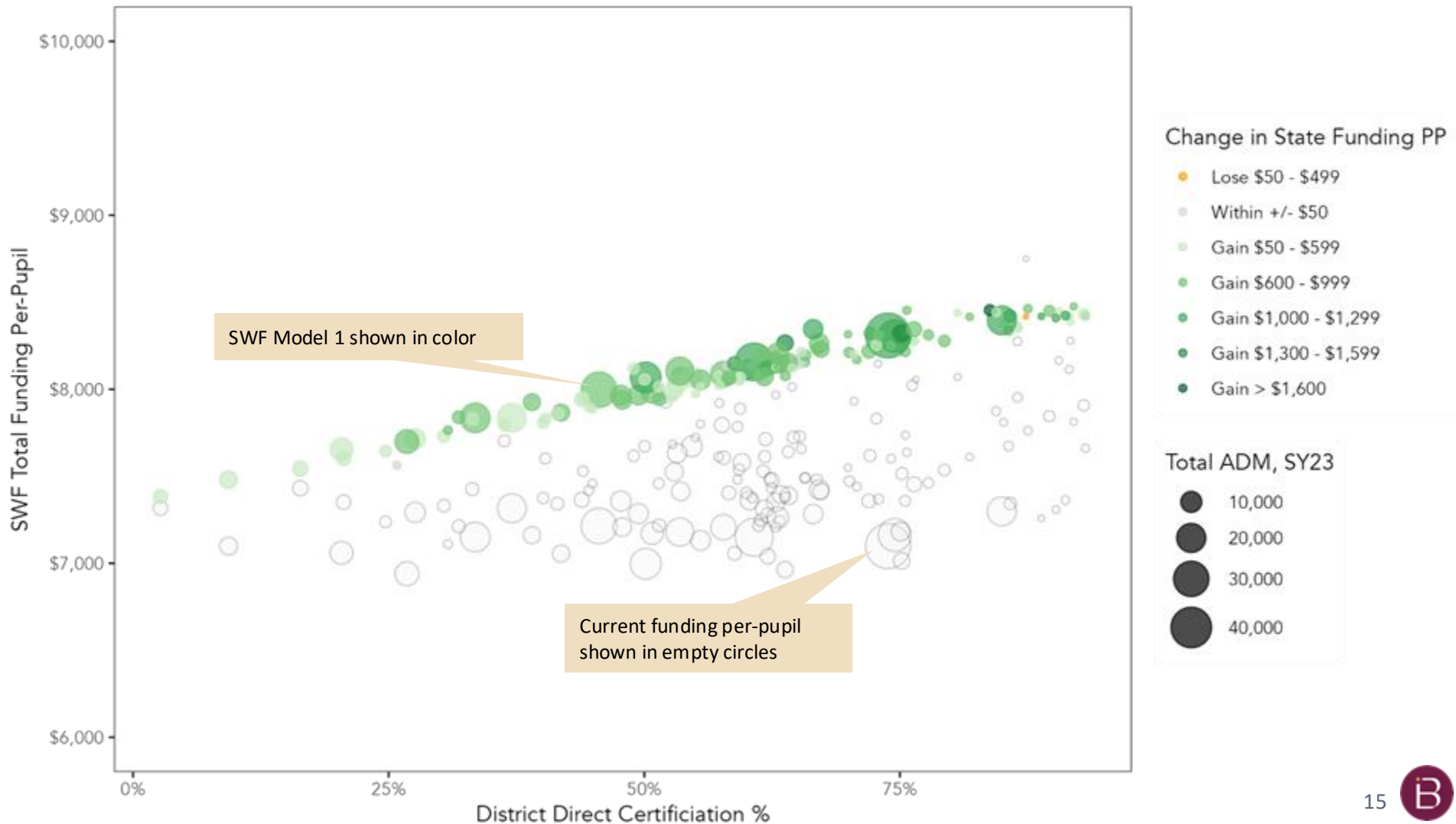
Policy Goals

If we decide to move forward, we would want a new student-weighted formula to accomplish the following:

- 1) We want to provide more funding to **better meet the needs of students.**
- 2) We want all districts to see **increased per-pupil funding.**
- 3) We want school systems to receive **more flexibility** in allocating the funding they receive through the state's funding formula.
- 4) We want systems to **retain discretion over local funding.**

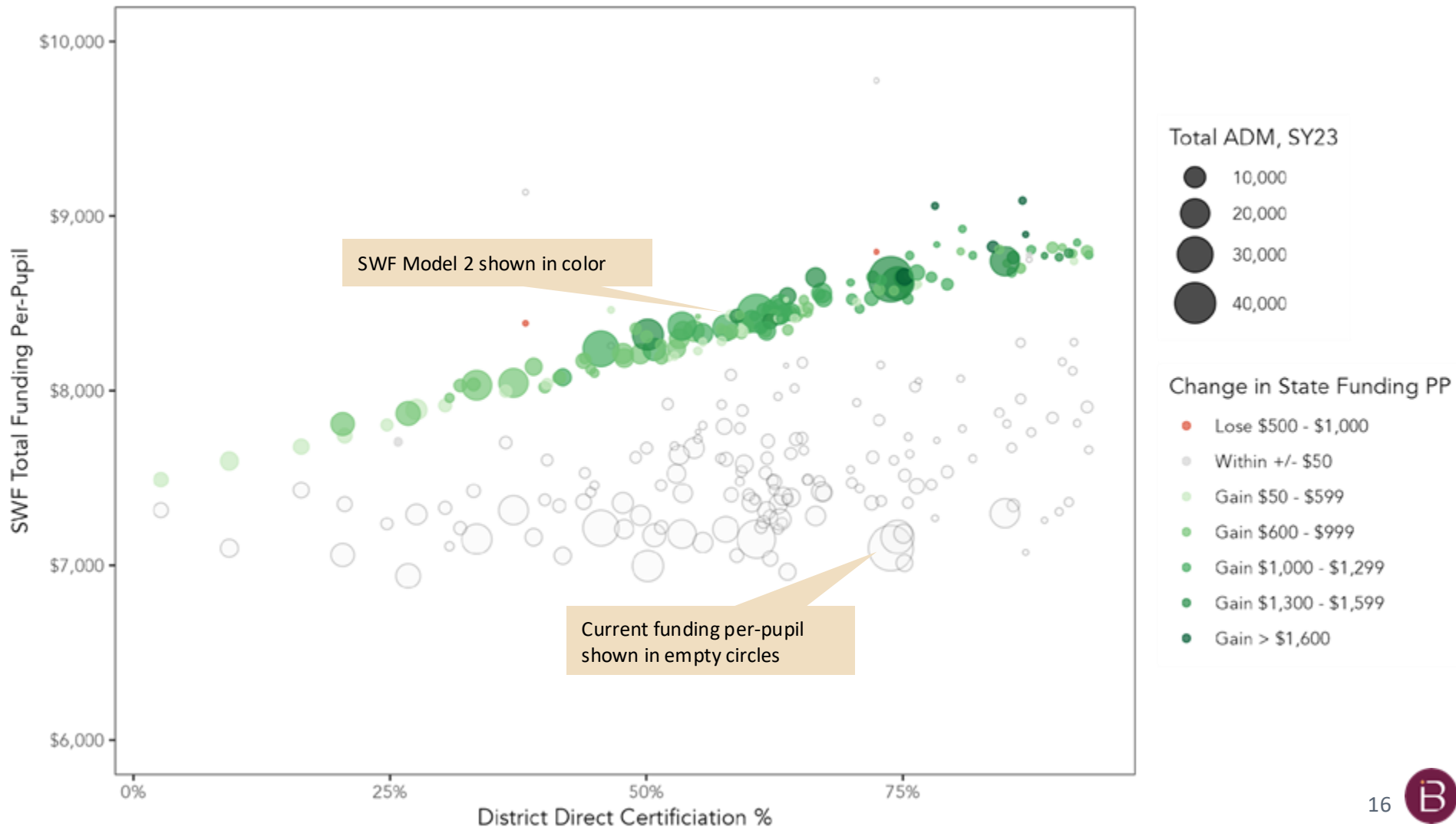
Model 1 does a better job of targeting funding as student poverty increases, but doesn't vary much from the current system for many districts

Model 1 Total Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty



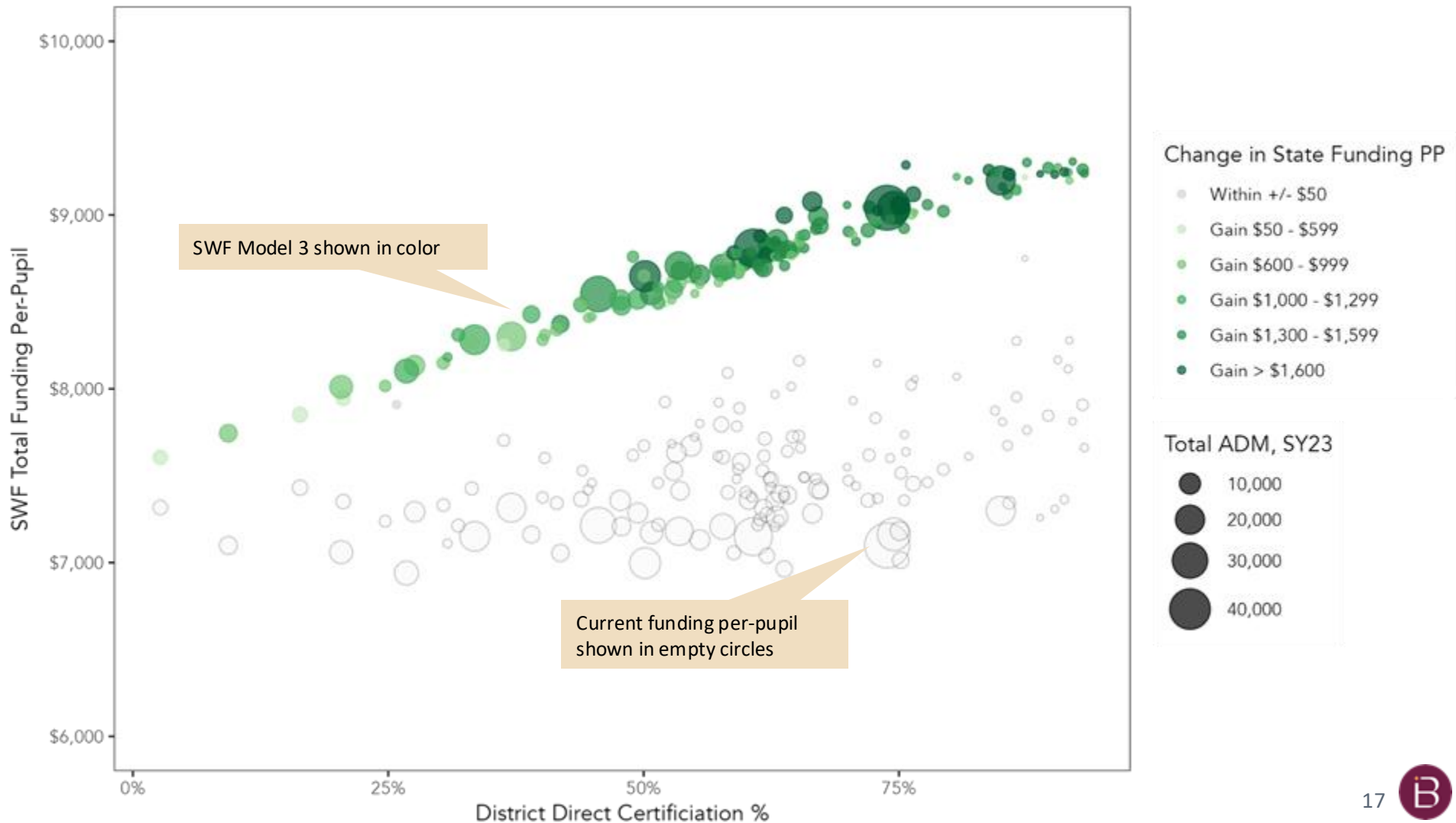
By increasing the base and the low-income and special education weights, Model 2 produces greater gains for more districts compared to the current system

Model 2 Total Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty



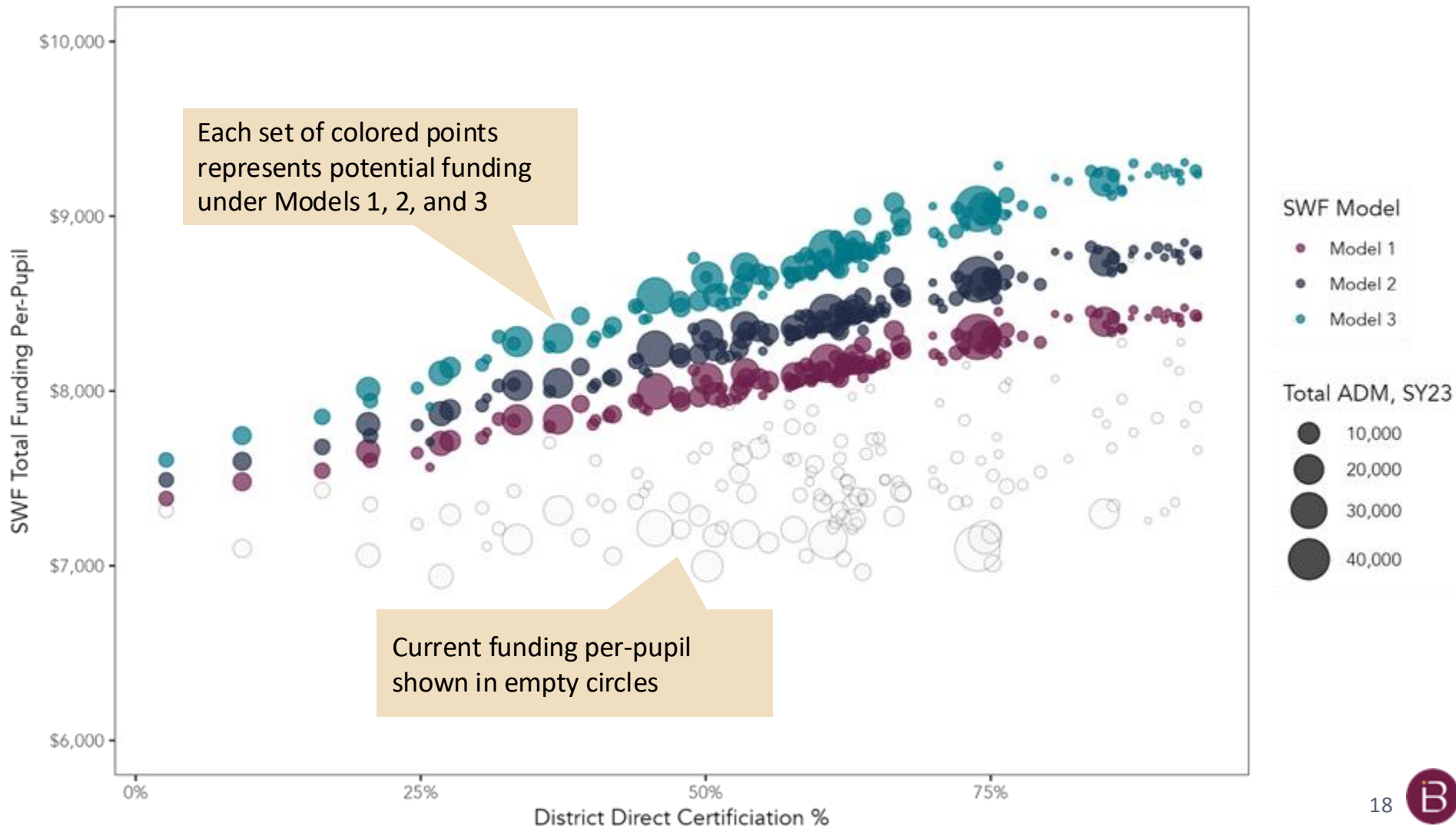
With the greatest investment through the highest base and weights, Model 3 shows the greatest change in funding compared to the current system

Model 3 Total Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty



These three SWF models illustrate what is possible under different revenue scenarios

SWF Model Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty



What is the best way to address these challenges? A Student Weighted Formula

Jennifer Schiess,
Bellwether

Money matters: Multiple academic studies link increased state formula funding with positive student outcomes

School Finance Reform and the Distribution of Student Achievement, LaFortune et al, 2016

- After 10 years, NAEP scores in low-income districts improved by 0.1 standard deviation, **roughly equivalent to 72 additional days of learning**
- Spending **\$1,000 more per student** in low-income districts closed roughly **one-third to one-half** of the **test score gap** between **low-income** and **high-income** districts

The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes, Jackson et al, 2015

- A 10% increase in spending over all 12 years of schooling resulted in:
- 0.27 more years of completed education for all students, 0.43 years for low-income children
 - 7.25% increase in adult wages for all students; 9.5% increase for low-income students

The Distribution of School Spending Impacts, Jackson et al 2021

- A \$1,000 increase in per-pupil spending over 4 years leads to:
- increased test scores (0.0352 standard deviations)
 - increased graduation rates (1.92 percentage points)
 - increased college going rates (2.65 percentage points)

In our work, we assess school funding formulas according to four principles:

ADEQUACY

- Is there enough funding in the system to enable schools to meet the state's educational mandate?
- Does the policy fulfill and protect the state's constitutional responsibilities to oversee an education system that can serve every child?

STUDENT NEED

- Does the policy allocate greater resources toward students with greater educational needs?
- Does it factor in local funding capacity in ways that enable the efficient use of limited state dollars to target the greatest needs?

RESPONSIBILITY

- Does the policy make clear the locus of decision-making for funding and budgeting, and split local and state responsibilities appropriately?

TRANSPARENCY

- Are policies clear and understandable on how funding is calculated and distributed? Are formulas only as complex as they need to be?
- Does reporting of revenue and expenditures create a feedback loop between student needs and state funding?

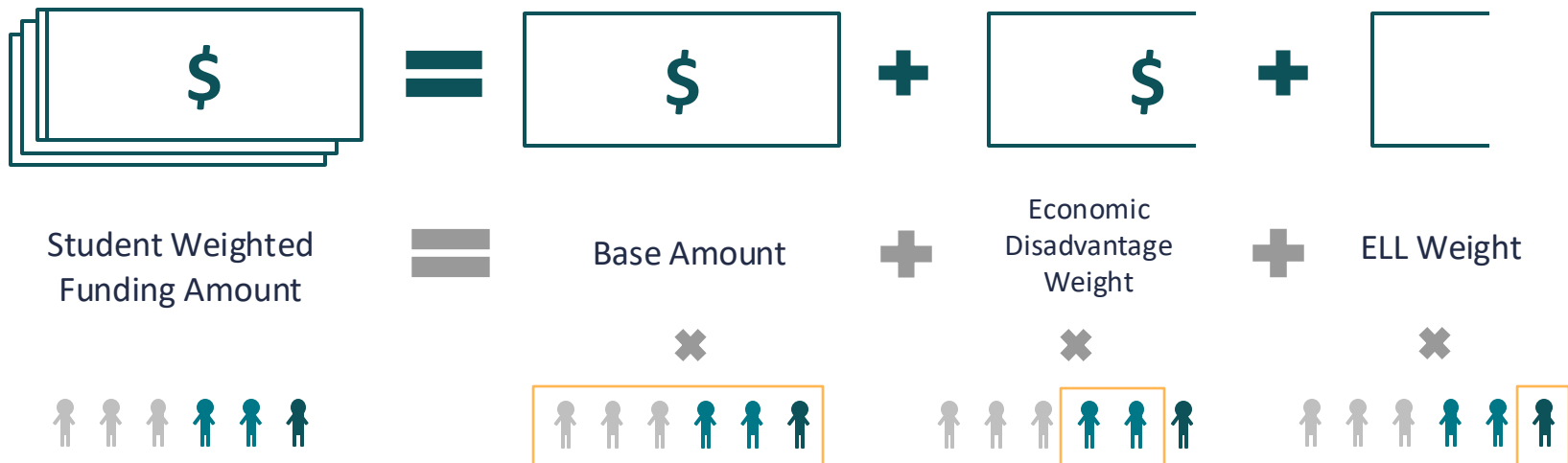
Every funding formula type has tradeoffs, but student-weighted formulas are best-aligned with all four principles

Unlike other formula types, student-weighted formulas specifically and directly anchor on student needs associated with increased educational cost

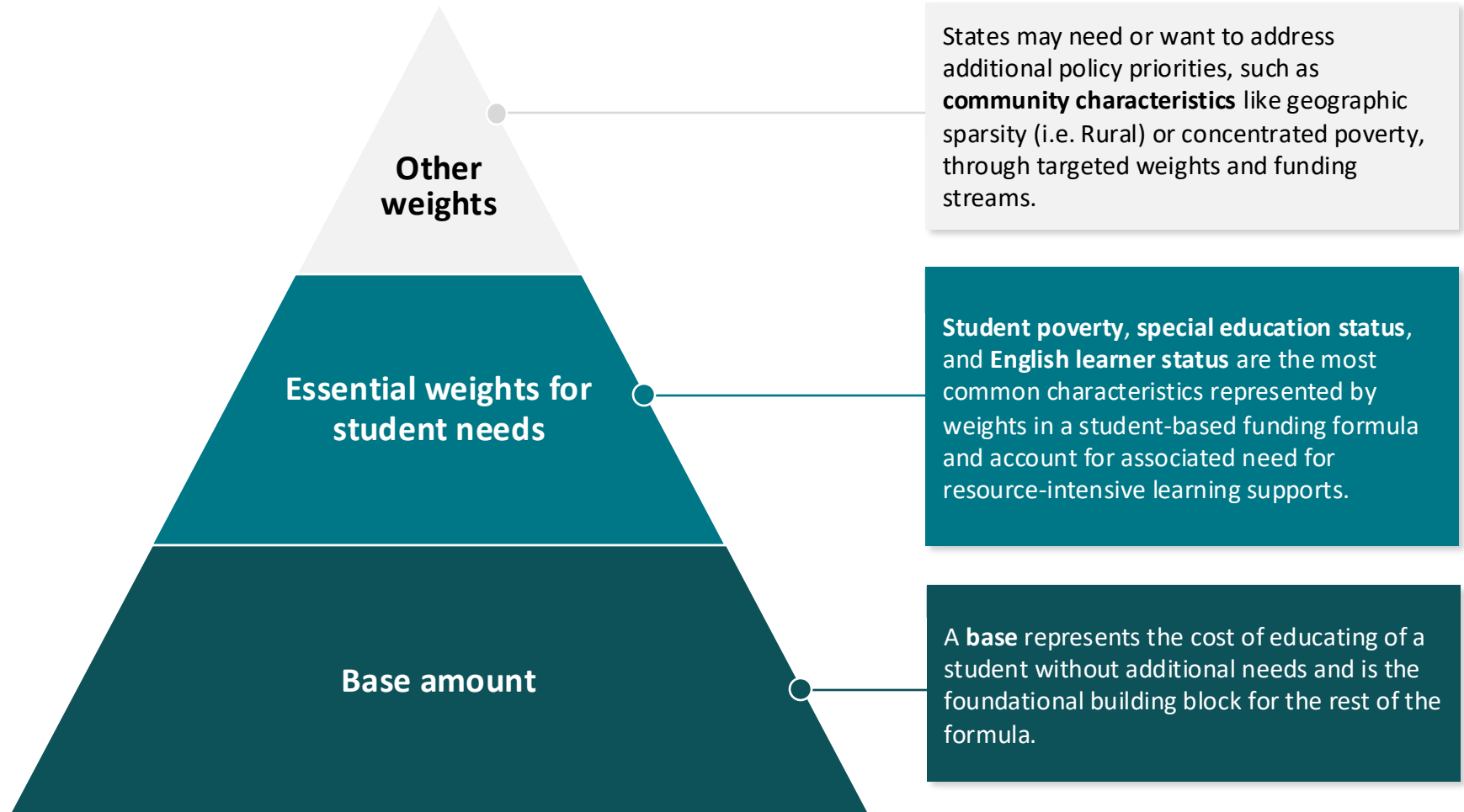
Principle	Student-weighted	Resource-based	Program-based
Adequacy	Straightforward mechanisms to adjust funding to match student needs	High potential to ensure funding matches costs Depends on costs mapping to needs	Lower potential to ensure funding matches costs or needs Programs have to map both to costs to deliver and to needs
Student Need	Highest potential to target funding to students in need of additional resources/supports	Lower potential to target funding to students in need of additional resources/supports	Lowest potential to target funding to need at the student level
Responsibility	Most opportunity for flexibility in spending decisions Clearest throughline for accountability	Flexibility can be hampered by cost assumptions or spending limitations	Least flexible for local decision-making
Transparency	Requires clear reporting structures/requirements Clearest connection to student needs	Often intuitive from a financial planning POV, but can be disconnected from student needs	Often simplest to understand Revenues and expenditures likely to track, but potentially not with need or outcomes

Student weighted funding formulas allocate additional funding for students with greater needs

At a high level, SWF follow a relatively simple structure beginning with a “base” amount to applies to every student enrolled and supplemented with “weights” that provide additional funding as a percentage of the base.



Building a student weighted funding formula requires making several key decisions...



Can Alabama afford to transition to a new formula?

Kirk Fulford,
Legislative Service Agency

EOY ETF Condition — FY 2024

Beginning Balance	\$2,518,997,462
Total Receipts (w/Projected September)	\$10,660,548,592
Total Available	\$13,179,546,054
LESS:	
Base Appropriations	\$9,480,295,192
Reappropriation of Reversions	\$312,059,145
Transfer to Budget Stabilization Fund	\$111,698,094
Transfer to Advancement and Technology Fund	\$1,000,000,000
Transfer to Educational Opportunities Reserve Fund	\$412,800,727
Total Obligations	\$11,316,853,158
Ending Balance Before Reversions and Adjustments	\$1,862,692,896
Projected Allocation of FY 2024 Ending Balance in FY 2025:	
Transfer to Budget Stabilization Fund	\$113,168,532
Transfer to Advancement and Technology Fund	\$873,794,314
Transfer to Educational Opportunities Reserve Fund	\$349,517,726
Remaining in ETF (Available for Supplemental Appropriation)	\$524,276,588
Total Fund Balances After FY 2025 Transfers:	
Budget Stabilization Fund	\$823,023,626
Advancement and Technology Fund	\$1,659,238,380
Educational Opportunities Reserve Fund	\$1,116,293,453

Allowed ETF Base Appropriations - FYs 2025-2030

Fiscal Year	Allowed Spending Growth	Allowed Base Appropriations	Growth Over Prior Year (\$)	K-12 Portion Based on FY 2025 Splits*	Additional K-12 (\$)
2025	6.25%	\$9,348,506,169	\$549,912,128	\$6,362,647,327	\$373,435,340
2026	6.00%	\$9,909,416,539	\$560,910,370	\$6,744,348,896	\$381,701,569
2027	5.75%	\$10,479,207,990	\$569,791,451	\$7,132,148,958	\$387,800,062
2028	5.75%	\$11,081,762,449	\$602,554,459	\$7,542,247,523	\$410,098,565
2029	5.75%	\$11,718,963,790	\$637,201,341	\$7,975,926,755	\$433,679,233
2030	5.75%	\$12,392,804,208	\$673,840,418	\$8,434,542,544	\$458,615,788

*Represents 68.06% of total base appropriations.

Total Projected ETF Receipts and Expenditures – FYs 2024 – 2030

Fiscal Year	Projected Total Available ETF Funds*	Projected Total ETF Expenditures	Projected Ending ETF Balance
2024	\$13,179,546,054	\$11,316,853,158	\$1,862,692,896
2025	\$13,245,600,699	\$11,660,553,224	\$1,585,047,474
2026*	\$13,079,272,008	\$11,794,464,013	\$1,284,807,995
2027	\$13,170,830,387	\$12,064,015,985	\$1,106,814,403
2028	\$13,398,347,579	\$12,488,576,852	\$909,770,727
2029	\$13,621,007,564	\$12,928,734,517	\$692,273,047
2030	\$13,837,903,174	\$13,385,077,255	\$452,825,919

*Assumes resumption of normal growth pattern with beginning balances included. Also assumes 1% reduction in sales tax on food in FY 2026.

FY 2025 Appropriations for Selected Programs

Program	Appropriation
High Needs Special Education Grant	\$17,400,000
<u>At-Risk:</u>	
Local Boards	\$21,217,734
Local School Financial Support	\$14,715,633
High Hopes	\$11,980,287
English Learner	\$18,500,000
Gifted Students	<u>\$12,350,000</u>
TOTAL	\$96,163,654

**Student Weighted
Formula:
Modeling Options**



Today we are discussing three sample models of what a SWF structure could look like for Alabama

- **All of these models are illustrations, not recommendations. They are intended to support discussion, questions, and feedback to support future decisions on whether and how to revise Alabama's school funding structure**
- **Each model includes a base amount and weights for five student groups:**
 - **low-income students,**
 - **students with disabilities,**
 - **English language learners,**
 - **gifted students, and**
 - **charter school students**
- **Models vary in the size of the base and each of the weights, and they vary in their total estimated cost**

Each model for discussion illustrates what policy options are possible under different revenue scenarios

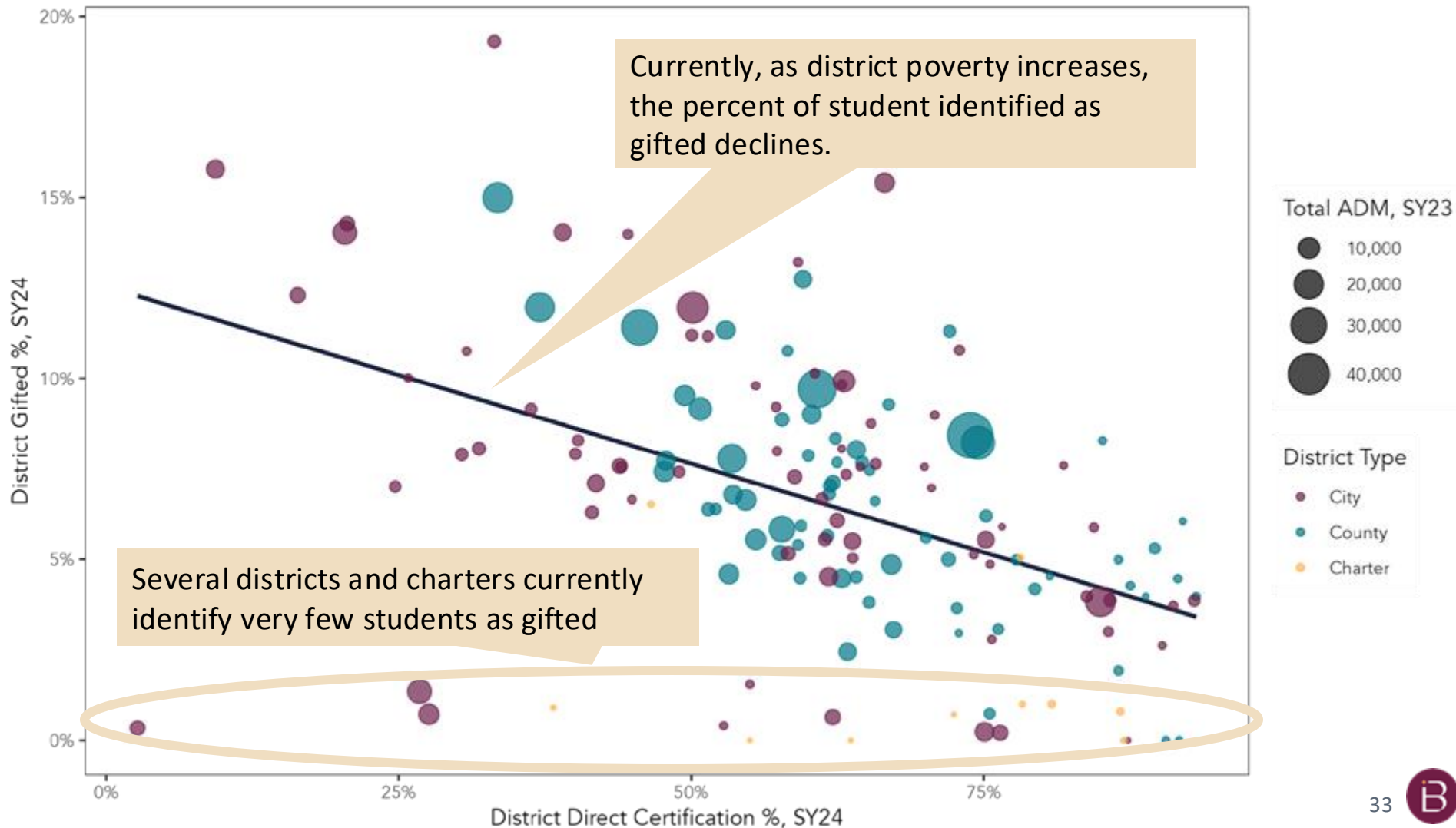
To illustrate the differences between policy options in different SWF models, we will look at three models that use varying revenue growth assumptions.

Revenue Growth Assumption	Simulated SWF Model
+ \$112 million per year for 5 years	Model 1
+ \$150 million per year for 5 years	Model 2
+ \$200 million per year for 5 years	Model 3







As we move across models, consider what inputs change, how those changes translate into different funding projections for LEAs, and how the results do (or don't) align with priorities among key stakeholders in Alabama.

Caution: Introducing a gifted weight based on current gifted identification rates may pose challenges in implementation

District Gifted Rate by Direct Certification Rate



Each model changes different parts of the formula to illustrate different revenue assumptions and priorities

Formula Component	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Base	\$7,150	\$7,200 	\$7,300 
Poverty Weight	17% (dir. cert.)	21% (dir. cert.) 	26% (dir. cert.) 
Special Education Weights	Tier 1: 10% Tier 2: 20% Tier 3: 80%	Tier 1: 15% Tier 2: 30% Tier 3: 100% 	Tier 1: 15% Tier 2: 30% Tier 3: 100%
English Learner Weight	10%	10%	15% 
Gifted Weight	5%	5%	5%
Charter Weight	5%	5%	5%
Cost	+\$112m per yr.	+\$150m per yr.	+\$200m per yr.

Each model changes different parts of the formula to illustrate different revenue assumptions and priorities

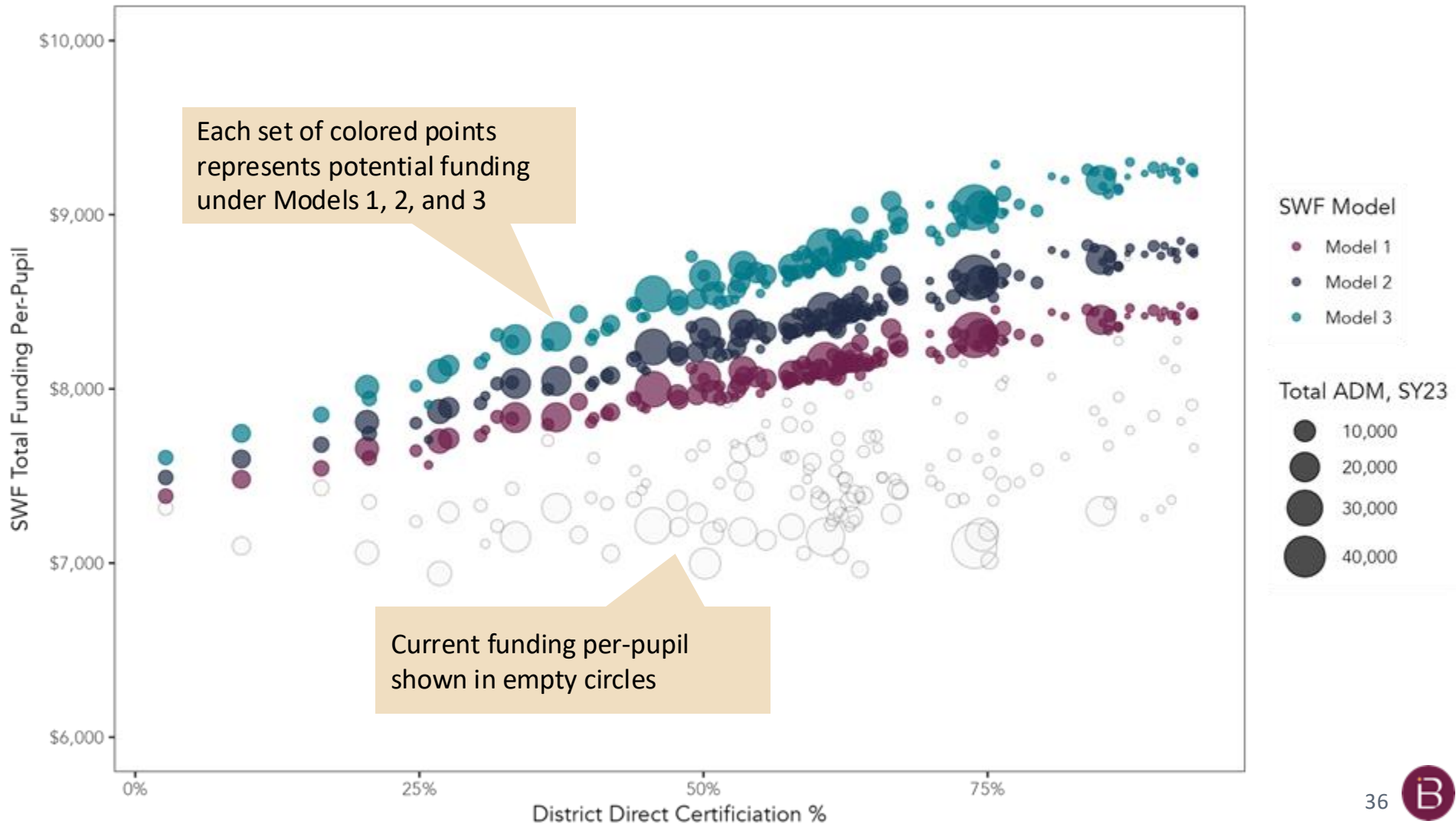
These funding streams are used as a conservative comparison point for these SWF models; further analysis will lead to more precise comparisons.

These funding streams are not included as comparison points for models; some may make sense to fold in future iterations; others may make more sense outside of a potential SWF.

Formula Component	Current System	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Base	Foundation + Nurses + Tech Coord., FY24 \$5,267,475,927 \$7,270 per-pupil	\$5,159,632,550 \$7,150 per-pupil	\$5,195,713,896 \$7,200 per-pupil	\$5,267,876,589 \$7,300 per-pupil
Poverty Weight	At-Risk, FY24 \$21,208,032 \$50 per-pupil	\$498,472,615 \$1,216 per-pupil	\$620,066,306 \$1,520 per-pupil	\$778,363,656 \$1,898 per-pupil
Special Education Weights	High-Needs Special Ed. Grant, FY24 \$17,400,000	\$128,331,466 \$1,377 per-pupil (avg.)	\$164,608,002 \$1,766 per-pupil (avg.)	\$166,894,224 \$1,791 per-pupil (avg.)
English Learner Weight	English Learners line item, FY24 \$14,155,334 \$365 per-pupil	\$27,764,740 \$715 per-pupil	\$27,958,899 \$720 per-pupil (avg.)	\$42,520,826 \$1,095 per-pupil
Gifted Weight	Gifted line item, FY24 \$10,925,000 \$192 per-pupil	\$20,313,946 \$357 per-pupil	\$20,456,002 \$360 per-pupil (avg.)	\$20,740,113 \$365 per-pupil (avg.)
Charter Weight	N/A	\$2,042,308 \$357 per-pupil	\$2,056,590 \$360 per-pupil (avg.)	\$2,085,154 \$365 per-pupil (avg.)

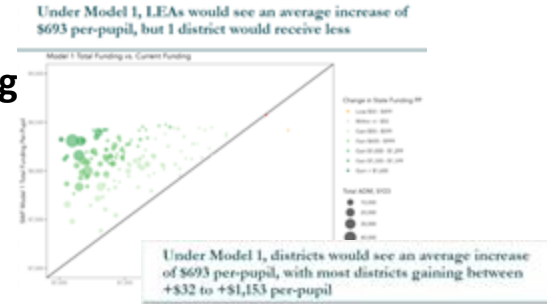
These three SWF models illustrate what is possible under different revenue scenarios

SWF Model Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty

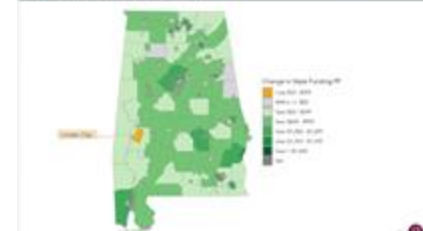


For each model, we will share the same analysis to demonstrate its impact

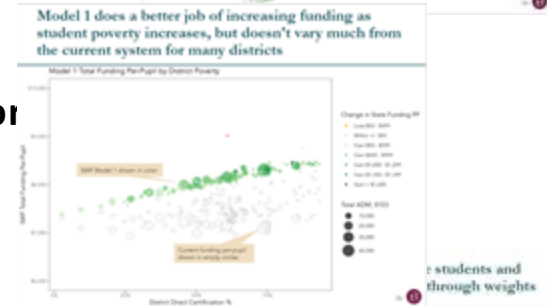
1 Comparison of funding per student under the current system and under the model. Districts above the black line gain funding under the model.



2 A map showing the relative change in funding per student for each district across a range of categories. Darker green signals larger gains.



3 An comparison of funding per student under the model (in color) and under current law (in empty circles) for districts based on their percentage of low-income students.



4 A summary table breaking down funding by the base and weights, compared to similar funding items in current law.

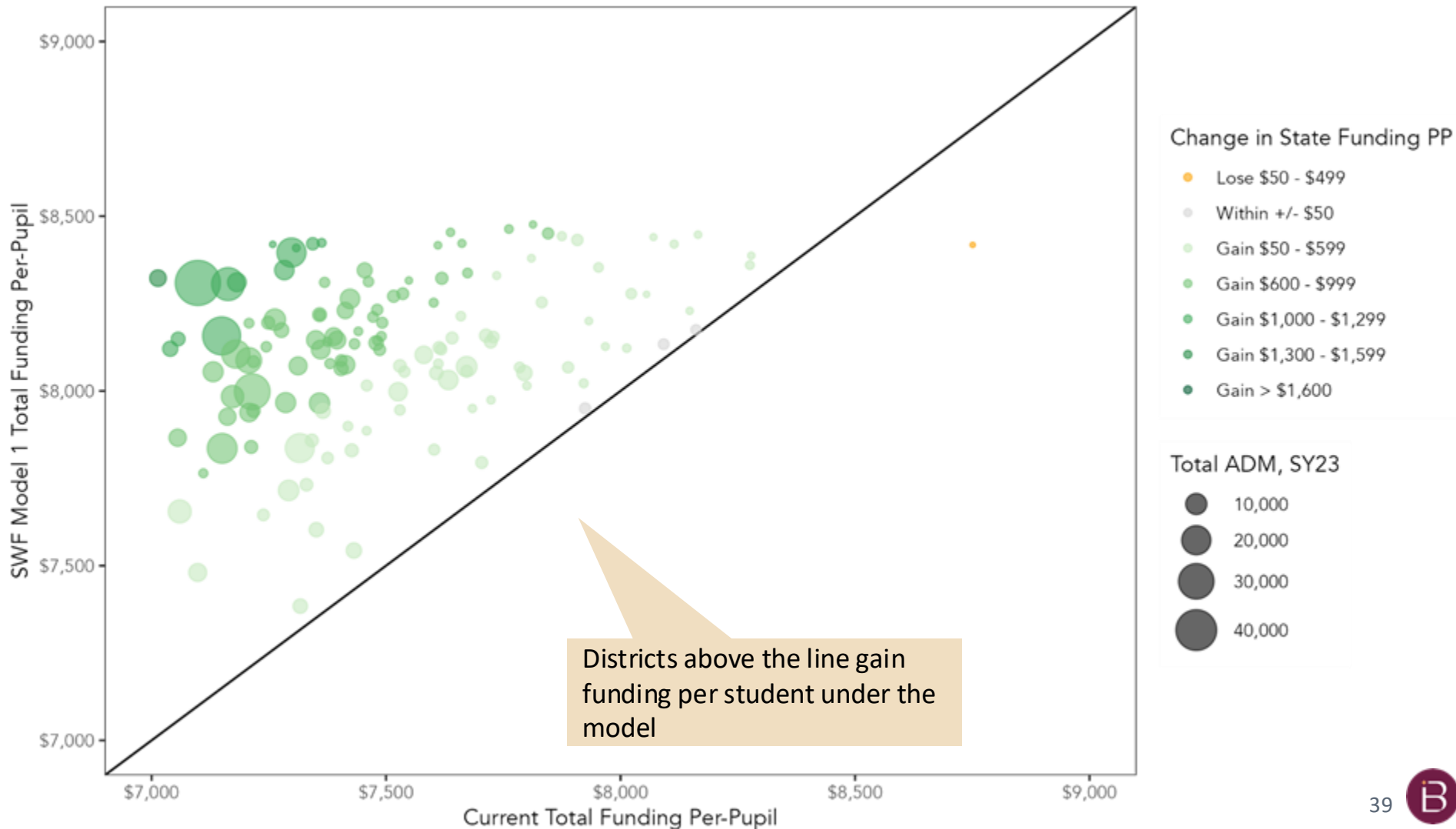
Funding Stream	Current Total Funding	Model 1 Total Funding	Students
Base	Foundation + Fees + Technology Fund - F24 \$1,342,475,807 \$7,101 per pupil	\$1,159,632,500 \$7,100 per pupil	121,621
Low Income	Lo. Inc. F24 \$2,208,000 \$27 per pupil	\$495,472,615 \$1,274 per pupil	410,267
Special Education	Spec. Edu. General Ed. Grants F22 \$17,400,000	\$128,371,844 \$1,277 per pupil (avg)	93,183
English Learner	English Learner Services Fund \$14,752,324 \$80 per pupil	\$27,764,740 \$75 per pupil	36,832
Gifted	Gifted/Future Gen. F23 \$14,900,000 \$70 per pupil	\$28,373,346 \$207 per pupil	54,823
Charter	N/A	\$2,042,200 \$307 per pupil	5,711

Model 1:
+\$112 million per year

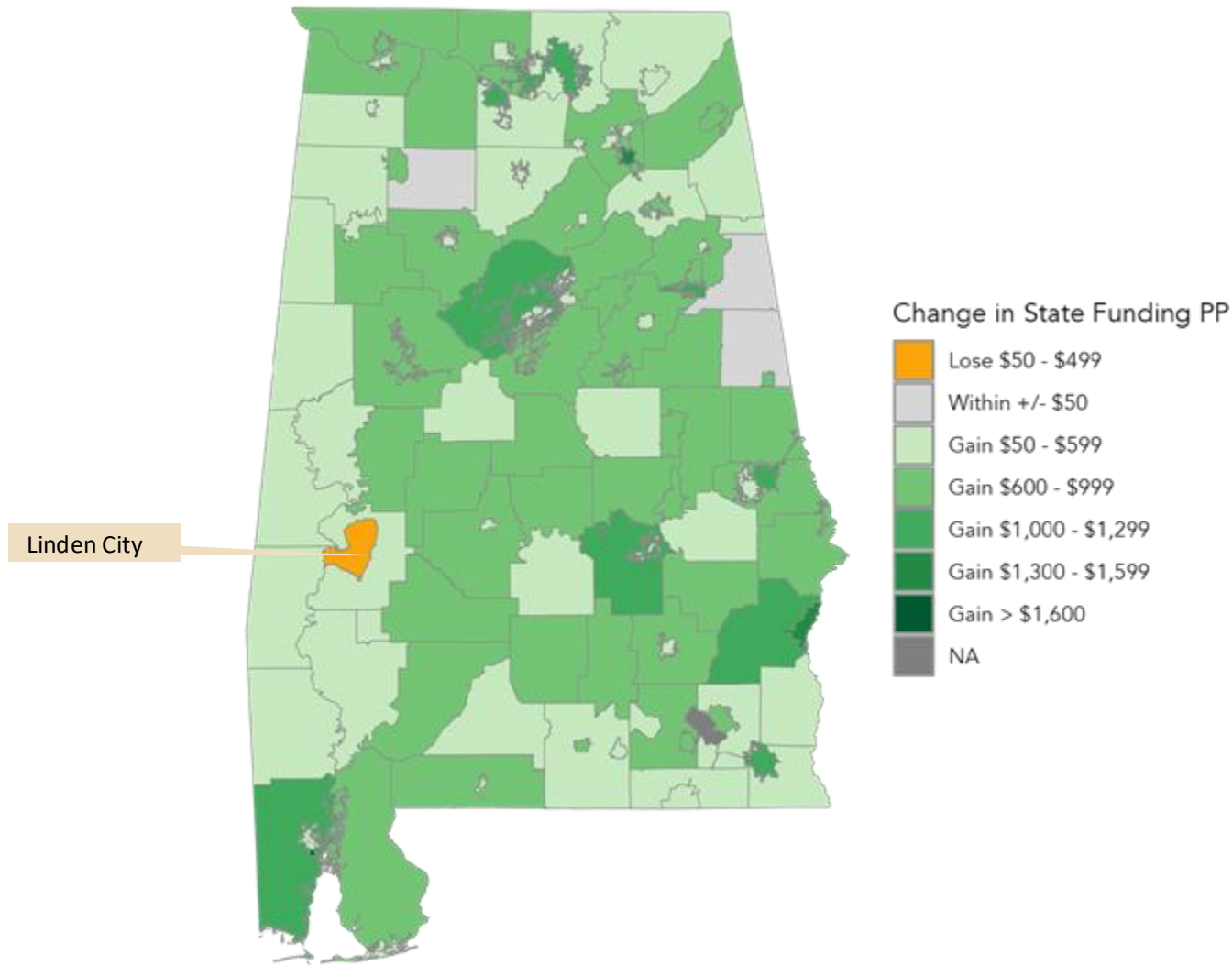


Under Model 1, LEAs would see an average increase of \$693 per-pupil, but 1 district would receive less

Model 1 Total Funding vs. Current Funding

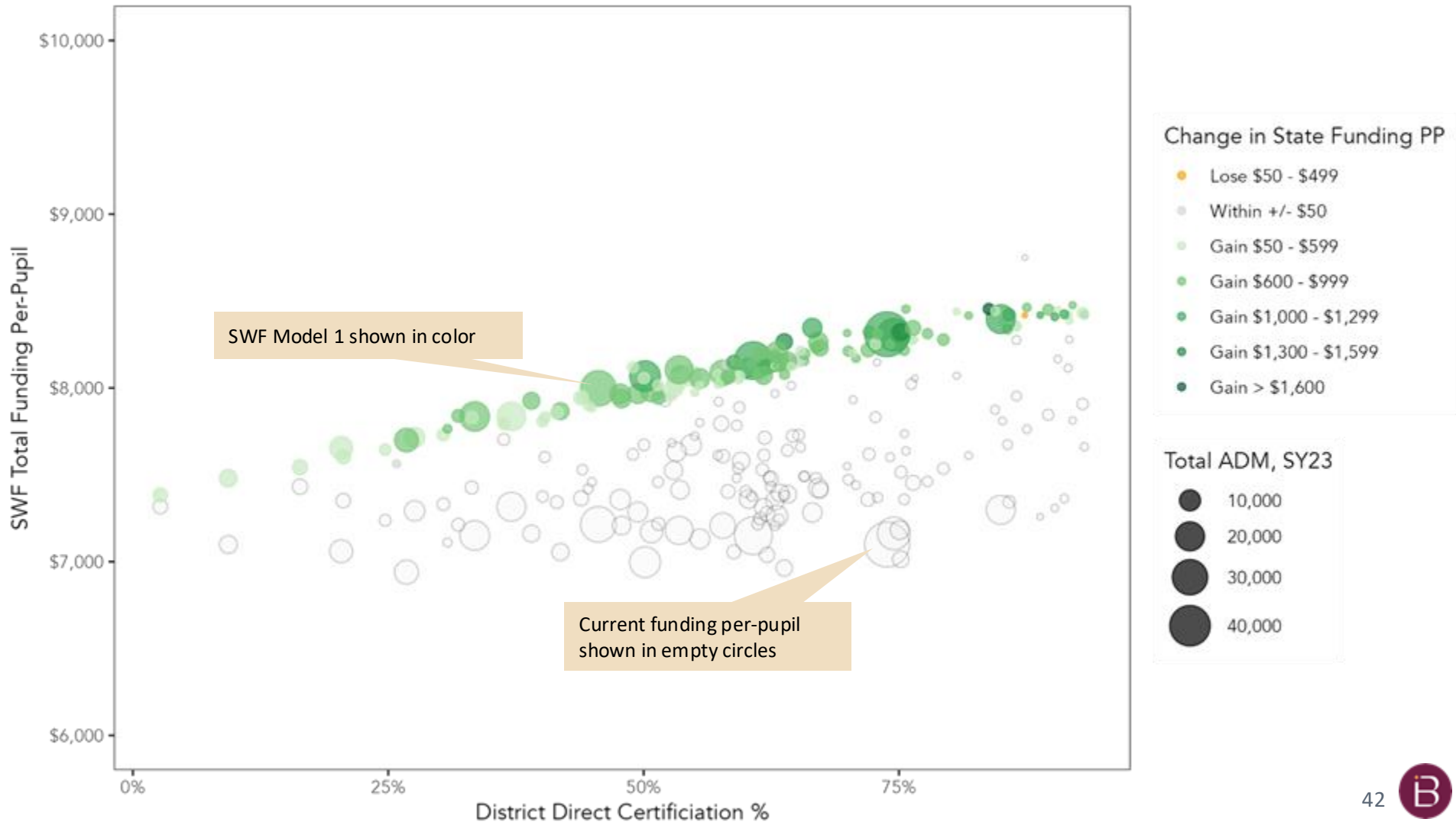


Under Model 1, districts would see an average increase of \$693 per-pupil, with most districts gaining between +\$32 to +\$1,153 per-pupil



Model 1 does a better job of targeting funding as student poverty increases, but doesn't vary much from the current system for many districts

Model 1 Total Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty



Model 1 directs \$498M for low-income students and \$128M for special education students through weights

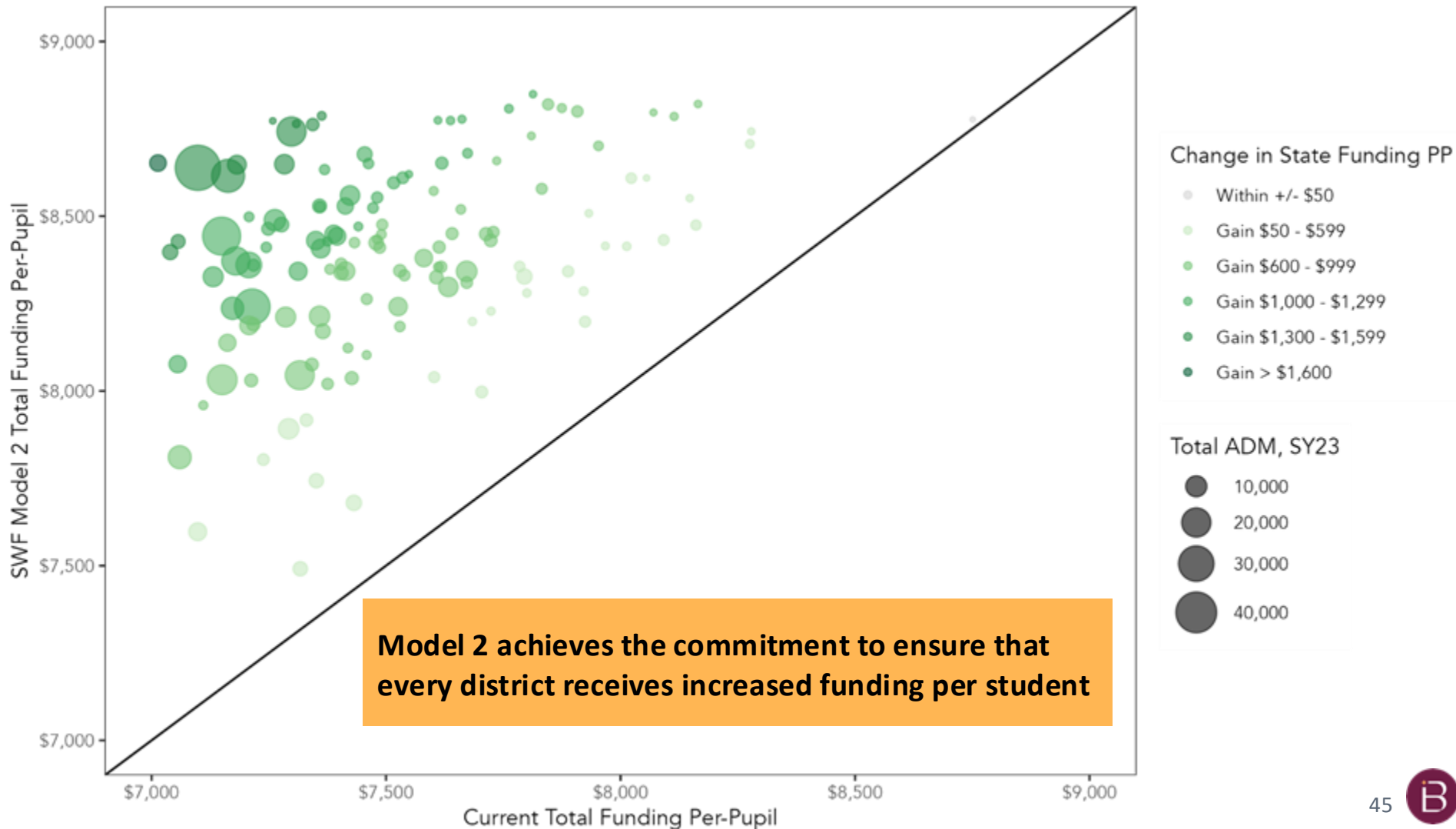
Funding Stream	Current Total Funding	Model 1 Total Funding	Students
Base	Foundation + Nurses + Technology Coord., FY24 \$5,267,475,927 \$7,270 per-pupil	\$5,159,632,550 \$7,150 per-pupil	721,627
Low Income	At-Risk, FY24 \$21,208,032 \$50 per-pupil	\$498,472,615 \$1,216 per-pupil	410,097
Special Education	<u>High-Needs Special Ed. Grant, FY24</u> \$17,400,000	\$128,331,466 \$1,377 per-pupil (avg.)	93,183
English Learner	<u>English Learners line item, FY24</u> \$14,155,334 \$365 per-pupil	\$27,764,740 \$715 per-pupil	38,832
Gifted	<u>Gifted line item, FY24</u> \$10,925,000 \$192 per-pupil	\$20,313,946 \$357 per-pupil	56,822
Charter	N/A	\$2,042,308 \$357 per-pupil	5,713

Model 2:
+\$150 million per year

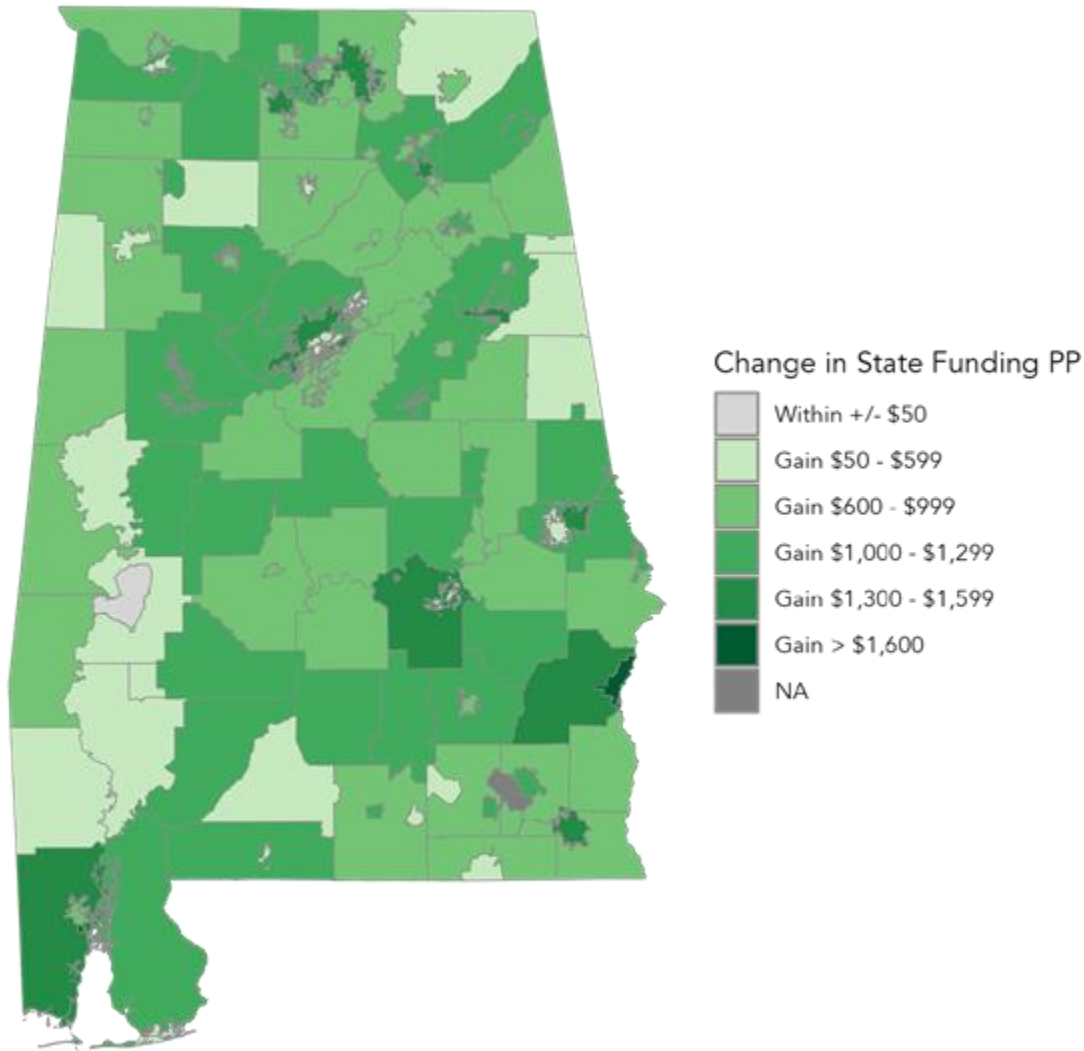


Under Model 2, LEAs would see an average increase of \$1,045 per-pupil, with all districts receiving more

Model 2 Total Funding vs. Current Funding

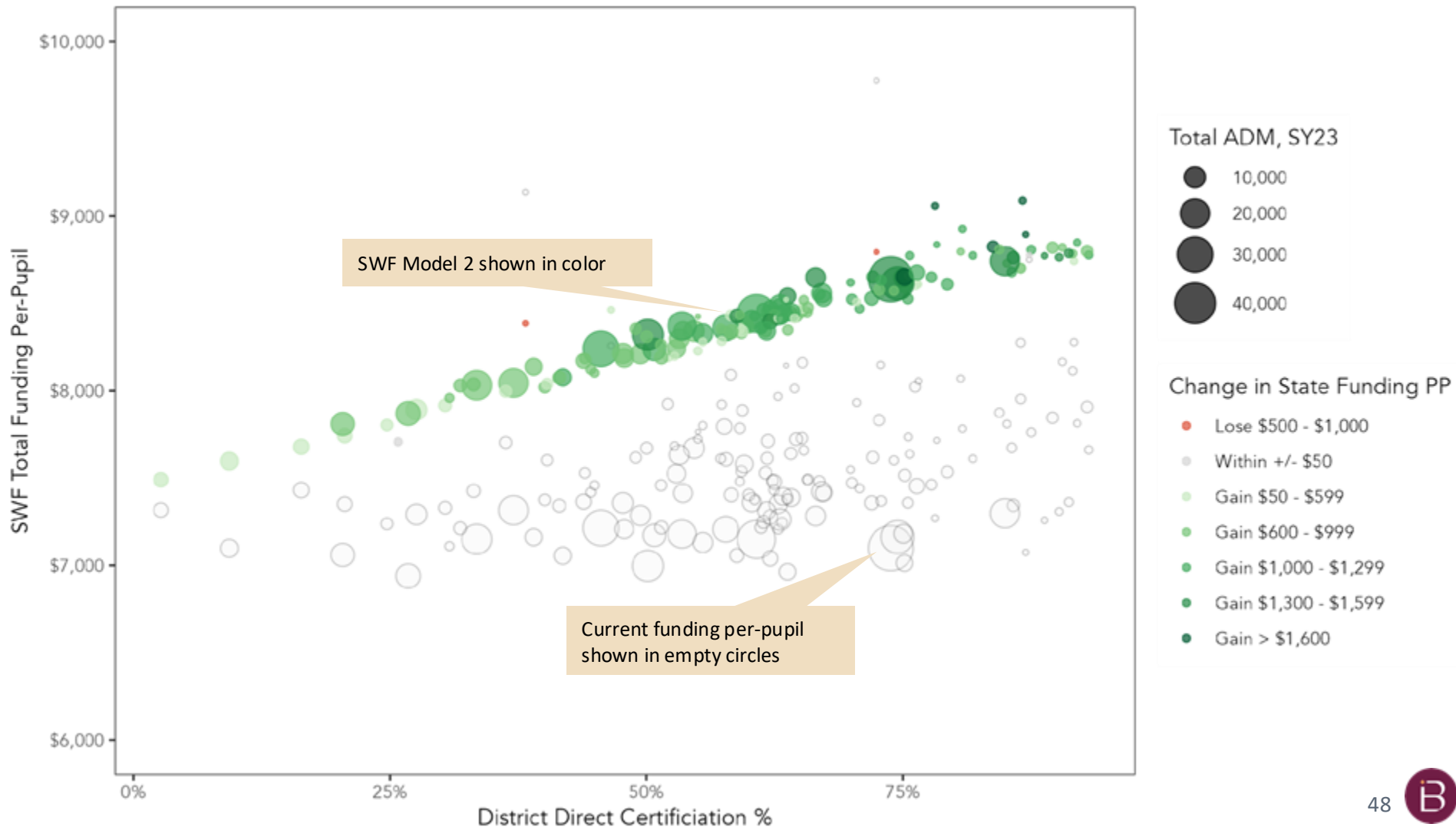


Under Model 2, LEAs would see an average increase of \$1,045 per-pupil, with most districts gaining between +\$260 to +\$1,492 per-pupil



By increasing the base and the low-income and special education weights, Model 2 produces greater gains for more districts compared to the current system

Model 2 Total Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty



Model 2 directs \$620M for low-income students and \$165 for special education students through weights

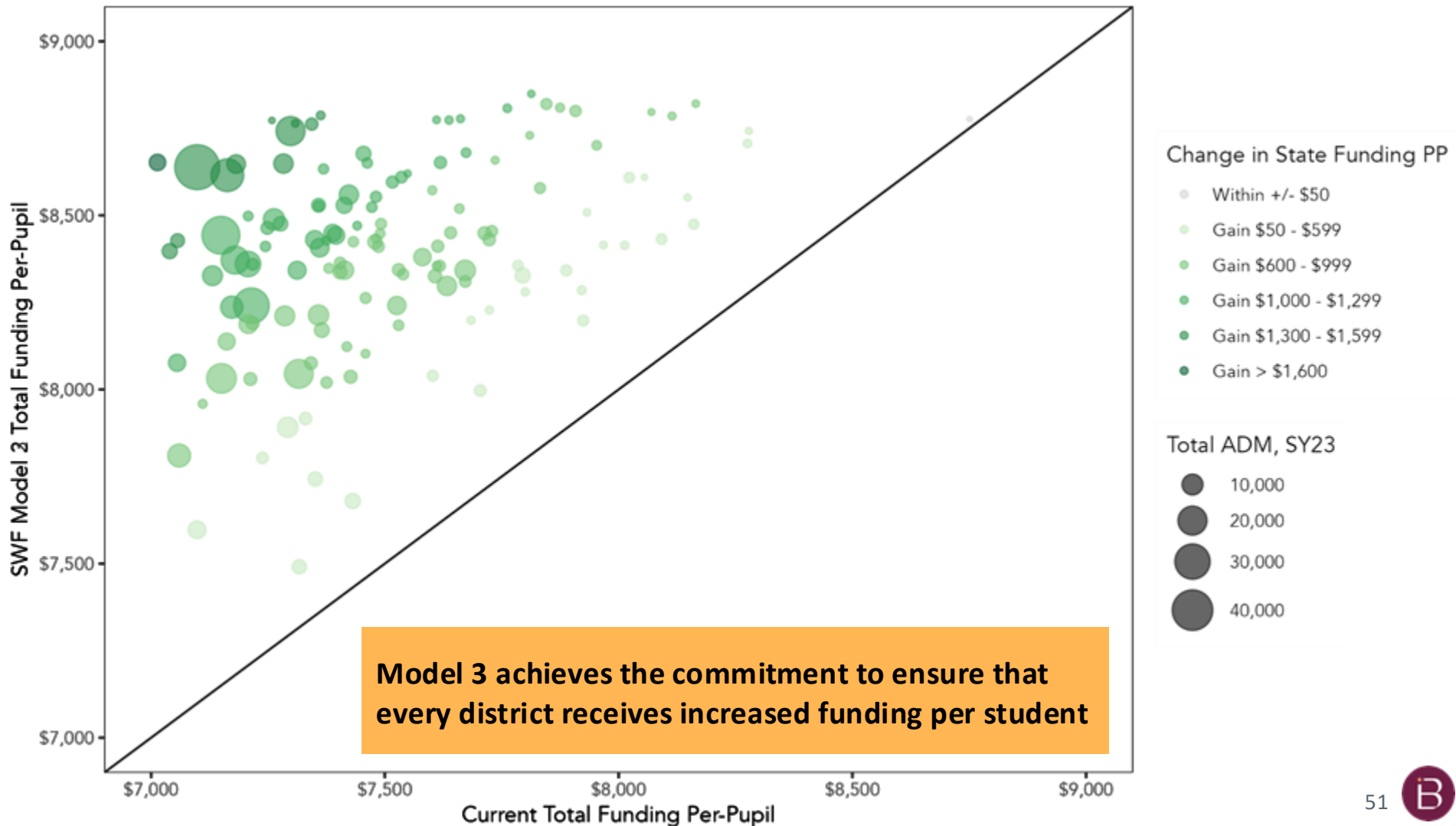
Funding Stream	Current Total Funding	Model 2 Total Funding	Students
Base	Foundation + Nurses + Technology Coord., FY24 \$5,267,475,927 \$7,270 per-pupil	\$5,195,713,896 \$7,200 per-pupil	721,627
Low Income	At-Risk, FY24 \$21,208,032 \$50 per-pupil	\$620,066,306 \$1,520 per-pupil	410,097
Special Education	<u>High-Needs Special Ed. Grant, FY24</u> \$17,400,000	\$164,608,002 \$1,766 per-pupil (avg.)	93,183
English Learner	<u>English Learners line item, FY24</u> \$14,155,334 \$365 per-pupil	\$27,958,899 \$720 per-pupil (avg.)	38,832
Gifted	<u>Gifted line item, FY24</u> \$10,925,000 \$192 per-pupil	\$20,456,002 \$360 per-pupil (avg.)	56,822
Charter	N/A	\$2,056,590 \$360 per-pupil (avg.)	5,713

Model 3:
+\$200 million per year

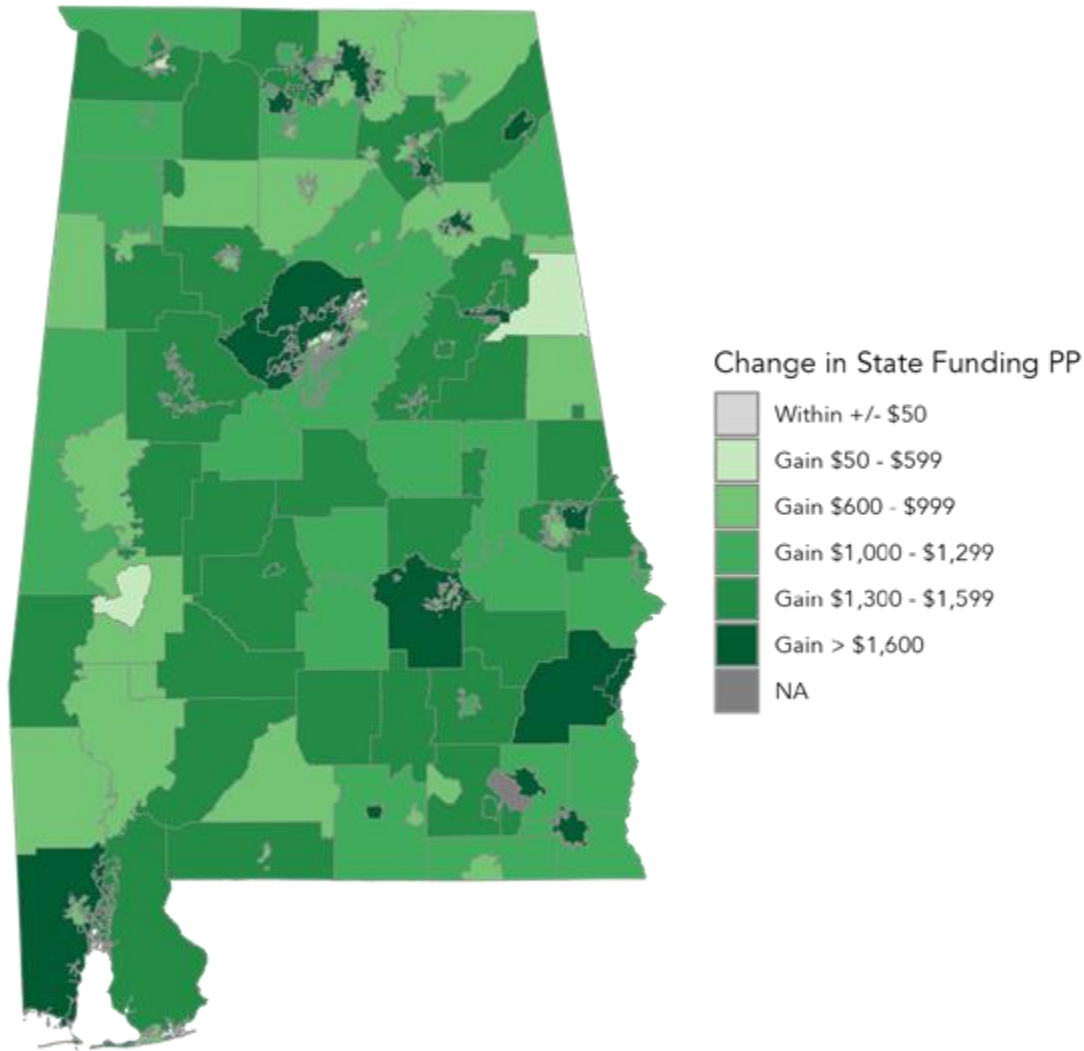


Under Model 3, LEAs would see an average increase of \$1,388 per-pupil, with all districts receiving more

Model 2 Total Funding vs. Current Funding

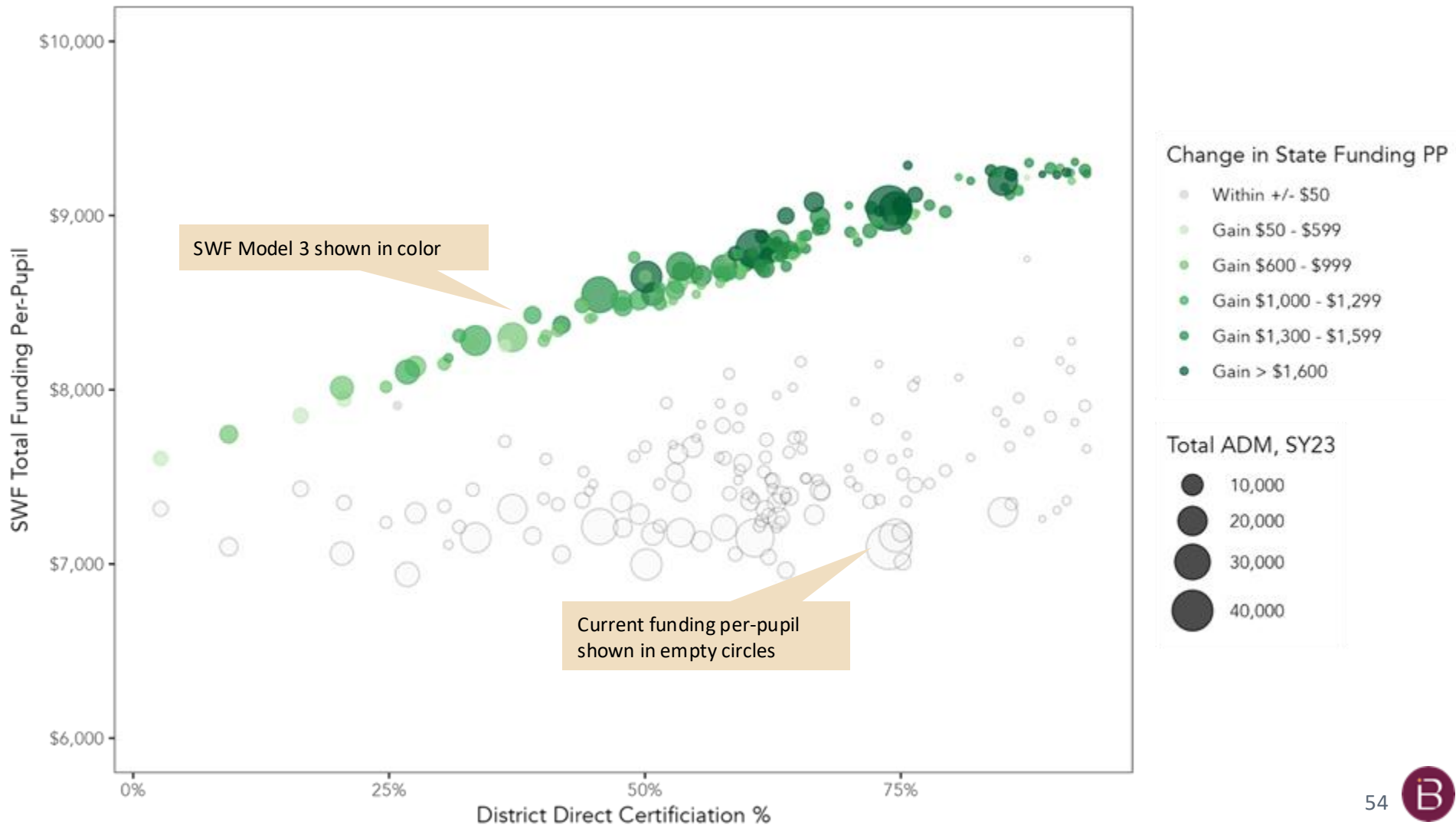


Under Model 3, LEAs would see an average increase of \$1,388 per-pupil, with most districts gaining between +\$523 to +\$1,935 per-pupil



With the greatest investment through the highest base and weights, Model 3 shows the greatest change in funding compared to the current system

Model 3 Total Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty

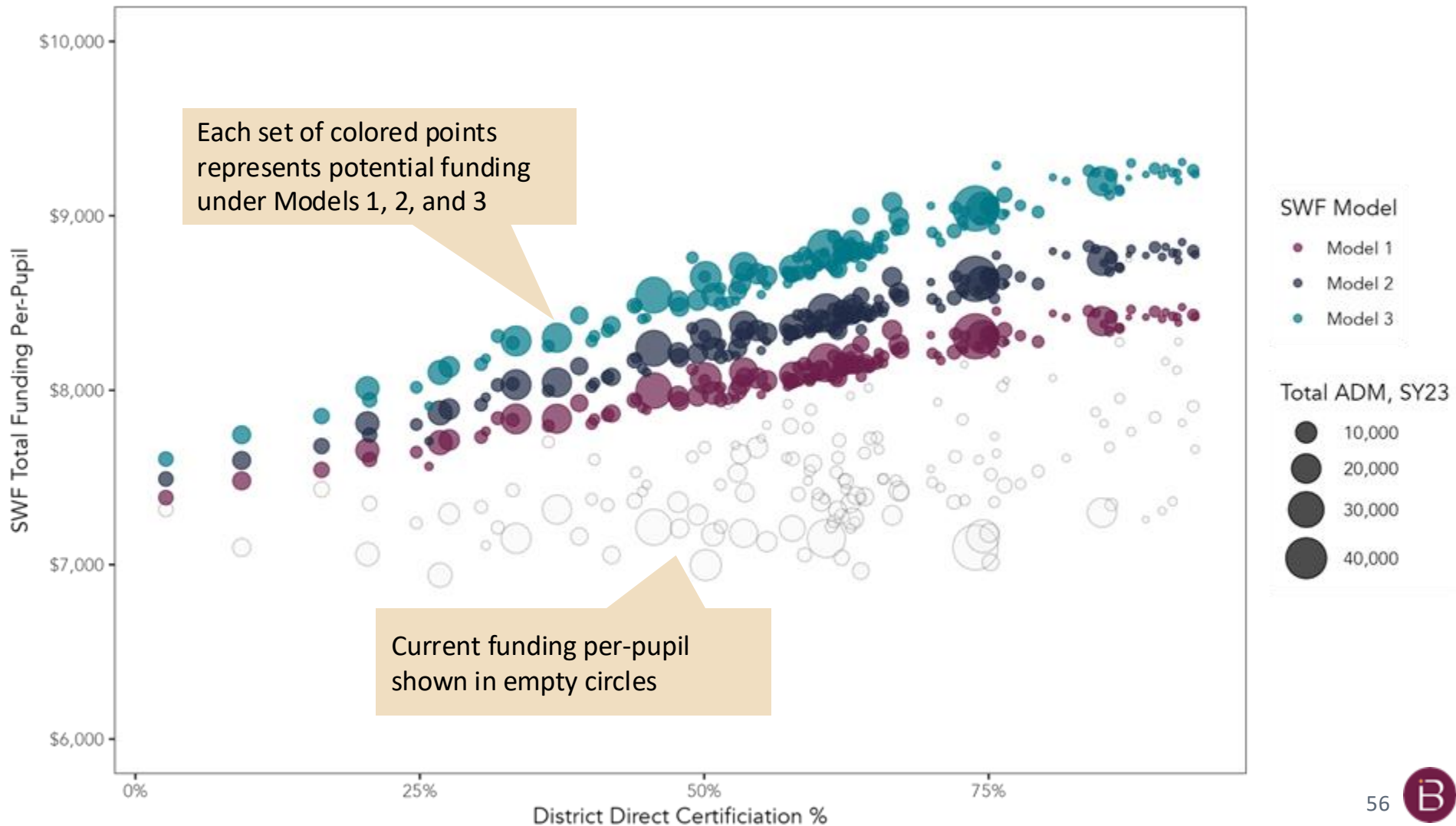


Model 3 directs \$778M for low-income students and \$167M for special education students through weights

Funding Stream	Current Total Funding	Model 3 Total Funding	Students
Base	Foundation + Nurses + Technology Coord., FY24 \$5,267,475,927 \$7,270 per-pupil	\$5,267,876,589 \$7,300 per-pupil	721,627
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Gifted	<u>Gifted line item, FY24</u> \$10,925,000 \$192 per-pupil	\$20,740,113 \$365 per-pupil (avg.)	56,822
Charter	N/A	\$2,085,154 \$365 per-pupil (avg.)	5,713

These three SWF models illustrate what is possible under different revenue scenarios

SWF Model Funding Per-Pupil by District Poverty



Accountability



A new funding formula can be supported with a mix of accountability and flexibility

District leaders need support to leverage flexible dollars to meet student needs

Student weighted funding formulas provide districts with more flexible state dollars than resource-based systems


- Unlike resource-based funding systems that provide a “template” for how districts allocate dollars, SWF systems enable more flexible and strategic spending at the district level.
- During the transition to a SWF, technical assistance for superintendents, budget officers, and school boards can help them rethink how they can strategically deploy state dollars to support student success.

Flexibility should be paired with accountability mechanisms to ensure responsible use of state dollars

Accountability mechanisms can provide safeguards for fiscal responsibility and maintain focus on student outcomes

- The way dollars flow through a SWF to address particular student needs can establish a baseline of accountability through transparency.
- Additional mechanisms of accountability can be established through state policy, including hearings for under-performing districts that can lead to audits or other corrective action.

Accountability for funding can take many different forms; which approach is right for Alabama?

	Accountability mechanism	How this mechanism could compliment funding reform	Key considerations
 <p>Less formal accountability</p> <p>More formal accountability</p>	Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify what funding is intended to support specific student needs Require districts to report how they are using weighted funding to support particular needs in alignment with district and state strategic priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires engagement to apply pressure and drive change
	Outcomes-based flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As districts demonstrate student growth, they can earn additional flexibility; stagnant or declining performance could lead to greater state oversight/intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria for earned flexibility need to be clearly established and communicated before implementation
	Audits + hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower policymakers to examine whether new funds are being spent in alignment with goals and provide public transparency into how local spending and outcomes align 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEAs should provide technical assistance, resources, and training to LEAs to support strategic budgeting of new funding New reporting requirements and systems may be needed
	State ESSA accountability system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding reform could be formally linked to mechanisms used in the state's accountability system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revising state ESSA plans can be technically and politically complex Likely requires federal approval

Maryland and Tennessee offer examples of innovative accountability approaches, 1/2



The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, 2021, is comprehensive education reform legislation focused on five pillars including:

1. Early Childhood Education
2. High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders
3. College and Career Readiness
4. More Resources for Students to Be Successful
5. Governance and Accountability

The Blueprint combines increased state funding and other policy changes with new, independent support and accountability structures.

- The **Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB)** is charged with developing the 10-year implementation plan for the Blueprint and holding state and local education agencies accountable
- **Expert review teams** regularly review district and school performance, recommend strategies for improvement, and recommend actions to the AIB, which (after 2025) can include withholding of up to 25% of new state funds for continued underperformance

Maryland and Tennessee offer examples of innovative accountability approaches, 2/2



The Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement, 2022, overhauled the state's school finance system and added \$1B in new money. TISA also created a financial accountability hearing structure

Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, the State Board of Education will hold hearings with districts operating low-performing schools.

- Hearings will be supported by data, largely drawn from existing required improvement plans and other resources
- Hearings will focus on how local decisions and strategies leverage each of seven areas linked by research to successful school improvement
 1. School Finances
 2. Climate and Culture
 3. Staffing
 4. Community Engagement
 5. Attendance
 6. Instructional Programming
 7. Data-driven Decision Making