Template Op-Ed for *Strolling Thunder*

**[STATE/COMMUNITY] policymakers must make babies and toddlers a local priority**

*By [NAME] and [NAME]*

[INSERT BRIEF STORY/ANECDOTE FROM *STROLLING THUNDER* FAMILY THAT DEMONSTRATES THE CHALLENGES].

The science is clear—our brains grow faster between the ages of 0 and 3 than at any later point in our lives, making more than one million new neural connections every second. When babies have nurturing relationships, early learning experiences, and good health and nutrition, those neural connections are stimulated and strengthened, laying a strong foundation for the rest of their lives. But when babies don’t get what their growing brains need during this crucial time, it can lead to life-long developmental, educational, social, and health challenges.

That’s why [ORGANIZATION] is joining the *Think BabiesTM* campaign to host *Strolling Thunder*TM in [CITY/STATE CAPITAL] and bring parents from [GEOGRAPHIC BREADTH] of [STATE/COMMUNITY] to urge their elected representatives to make babies’ care and development a priority in 2019 and beyond. It’s all part of the *Think Babies* campaign to call on all policymakers to invest in infants, toddlers, and their families.

In [STATE/COMMUNITY], we have seen firsthand the [DETAIL CHALLENGES AFFECTING FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AGES 0 TO 3, AND HOW THIS AFFECTS THEIR HEALTH AND FUTURE POTENTIAL— We know that the state where a baby is born makes a big difference in their chance for a strong start in life. Overall, [STATE] ranks in the (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th) tier looking at areas essential to give our babies the best beginning, but all states have room to grow. [FIND YOUR STATE RANKING AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL DATA POINTS [HERE](https://stateofbabies.org/states/)]

[FAMILY NAME], and all of our families in [STATE/COMMUNITY], need [DETAIL SUPPORTS AS THEY RELATE TO PARTNER POLICY PRIORITIES].

That’s why we need our policymakers to *Think Babies*—by [INSERT CALL TO ACTION]. Doing so will [INSERT POSITIVE FUTURE OUTCOME FOR CHILDREN AND STATE/COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE].

Learn more at [WEBSITE].

*[NAME] is the [TITLE] of [ORGANIZATION]. [NAME] is the [TITLE] of [ORGANIZATION].*

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