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, positive 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 to thrive, they don’t develop as they should. This leads 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 20XX and beyond. It’s all part of the *Think Babies* effort 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— The state where a baby is born makes a big difference in if they get a strong start in life. [STATE] is currently classified in the [INSERT STATE TIER - FIND YOUR STATE RANKING [HERE](https://stateofbabies.org/states/)] according the GROW scale of the State of Babies Yearbook which groups states into four tiers from lowest to highest, referring to different stages of growth in terms of child and family well-being outcomes and policies. Yearbook data show that the littlest [STATE DENOMYNM] still face big challenges.

[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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