Template Op-Ed for Policy Forum

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

*By [NAME] and [NAME]*

[INSERT BRIEF STORY/ANECDOTE FROM A 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, forming 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 hosting a policy forum in [STATE/LOCAL AREA] to highlight the challenges faced by babies and their families in [STATE/COMMUNITY] and the policies that support infants, toddlers, and families to thrive. Policymakers must make babies’ care and development a priority in [YEAR] and beyond.

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 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].*