

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

**STROLLING THUNDER** 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

**Grey**

This is my story.

**Location:**

**Juneau, Alaska**

**My Grown Up's Name:**

**Amyrkha Harris**

“ When teachers are struggling to take care of themselves, it bleeds into the way they take care of children. When we support teachers, children are supported.



**Quality child care and early learning opportunities support the healthy development necessary for parents to reliably go to work or school, and for babies to do well in school and, ultimately, in life. Federal policies are foundational to ensuring child care and early learning access, including through programs like the Child Care and Development Fund and Head Start, including Early Head Start.**

## Our story begins...

I've been in child care my whole life. Not because I planned it that way, but because it's what I know and what I care deeply about. I grew up helping raise my five younger siblings. My first jobs at 13 were in a church nursery and as a babysitter. Now I am 24, working as a lead teacher, earning my associate's degree in infant and toddler development, and raising my son, Grey, who is 9 months old and full of life.

But for a long time, I didn't think I should have a child because I am a Black woman, and I knew the statistics that women of color are three to four times more likely to die in childbirth. I worried until Juneau's child care community showed me I was seen and valued.

When I was pregnant and didn't yet have insurance, every prenatal appointment cost \$600 out of pocket. On top of that, I was in an occupational endorsement program, which meant I wasn't a full employee and that maternity leave wasn't guaranteed. My employer created a pathway.

And when I think about what it takes to raise a baby—the teachers, pediatricians, federal lifelines like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (or WIC)—child care workers are at the center of it. Grey is here because people showed up for me.

When we pay them and support them, they can show up.

When they can show up, babies thrive.

## IT'S TIME To Make Policy Change

All families want their babies to have a safe, nurturing place to learn and grow, but finding child care we can afford feels impossible. Without it, I'm forced to make difficult decisions about work, school, and how to provide for my family. I'm asking Congress to invest in affordable, high-quality child care and early learning programs so parents like me can fulfill their responsibilities and our babies can get a strong start.

### We Want Congress to Support Positive Early Learning Experiences by:

- Increasing funding for child care access via the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start, including Early Head Start, while preserving quality standards and workforce investments and rejecting policies that would reduce access.
- Opposing cuts to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), Child Care Entitlement to States (CCES), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and other programs that keep child care providers open.
- Investing in early intervention through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C, ensuring services are available in the home and integrated into early learning and care settings.

*About Think Babies™ and Strolling Thunder™*

ZERO TO THREE created Think Babies™ as a call to action for policymakers to prioritize good health, strong families, and positive early learning experiences, particularly during the crucial early years of brain development. Strolling Thunder™ is an annual event for families to share their stories with their elected officials in person. [Learn more at www.ThinkBabies.org/StrollingThunder](http://www.ThinkBabies.org/StrollingThunder).