

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm Baby

London

This is my story.

Location:

Washington, D.C.

My Grown Up's Name:

Aisha Parker

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Federal policies play a critical role in the health and well-being of both babies and their caregivers, including through Medicaid, early intervention, mental health, and pediatric investments. By investing in the health and well-being of children and their families now, we can set them up for lifelong success, and the future success of our country.

Our story begins...

I am a single mother raising two children on the autism spectrum in Washington, DC. My daughter, London, is 3. My eldest is 15. Every single day, I show up for them — through evaluations, through waitlists, through therapists who leave and have to be replaced, through school systems that don't always honor their IEPs.

When London was 1, I knew something was off. I reached out to her doctor. It took almost a year — until she was 18 months — before anyone would see her. That is a year of her brain developing without the support she needed.

My oldest had therapists who stayed for nine or 10 years. That consistency mattered. In the past year alone, London has had nine therapists. Every time one leaves, she regresses. It takes three to six months just to get back to where she was. That's not progress. That's treading water.

When London had her evaluation meeting recently, I brought her current therapist with me. That decision changed everything. The therapist could speak to who London is, not just what a test score said about her deficits. Without that voice in the room, the plan for London's school placement would have looked completely different.

Parents shouldn't have to figure that out on their own. We shouldn't have to Google our way through a diagnosis while our children's window for early development quietly closes.

IT'S TIME To Make Policy Change

Families like mine are doing everything we can to keep our babies healthy, but it's not always easy to find affordable care or get the support we need. When appointments are delayed or services aren't available, for me or my baby, it affects children for the rest of their lives. That's why I'm asking Congress to invest in programs that make sure caregivers and babies like mine can access reliable care from the very beginning.

We Want Congress to Support Good Health by:

- Opposing cuts to Medicaid to ensure babies and those who care for them can access the care they need for a strong, healthy start.
- Increasing funding for early intervention through Medicaid and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C to ensure young children stay on track.
- Increasing investment in early childhood health and mental health, including through SAMHSA's Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Grant Program and Project LAUNCH, HRSA's Early Childhood Development Expert program and HRSA's Transforming Pediatrics for Early Childhood.

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).