

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Skylar

This is my story.

Location:

Wilmington, Delaware

My Grown Up's Name:

RaShona Brown

“ Child care is not an extra. It makes it possible for parents to work, and for children to flourish.



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 have four children. My husband, Marques, is a school administrator at an inner-city school in Delaware. He works long hours, but most days he's home for after-school activities. I want to work and contribute financially to our family. But for years, the cost of child care has made that impossible.

We have four children—Skylar, 2; Zoe, 7; Sebastian, 12; and Benjamin, 14. When my youngest was born, I ran the numbers. Part-time child care was \$1,200 a month. Full-time was \$1,600. I was working at a nonprofit in a role that had grown into a rewarding career. It was flexible enough to manage our household. I brought home about \$2,200 a month. Enough to cover child care, but not much more.

When I lost my job due to budget cuts, there was no other job that made financial sense. So, Skylar and I have been home together for six months.

I am not resting. I run a household with four kids. I manage side businesses to bring in income. I worry about food. And I try to keep a 2-year-old engaged and learning without access to the structure and support of a quality early learning program.

My third child, Sebastian, had a speech delay. He thrived in a structured environment with teachers and other children. I'm starting to see similar concerns with Skylar. She needs that support, too.

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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).