

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm Baby

**Matthew**

This is my story.

**Location:**

**Jacksonville, Florida**

**My Grown Up's Name:**

**Nayeli**

“ Child care would have been \$3,000 a month. That was most of my salary. So, I resigned.



**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 a master's degree in public policy. My focus was early childhood policy — I know the research. I know what quality early learning does for a child's developing brain. I believe in that work deeply.

I also had to quit my job because of it.

After my son Matthew was born, I sat down and calculated what it would cost to keep both of my kids — Jewell, who was 3 at the time, and Matthew, who is now 8 months old — in quality childcare. The total came to about \$3,000 a month. That was most of my salary as a research assistant. I had to walk away from it because the math was simply impossible.

My husband, Max, is a commercial crabber. He's on the water by 4 or 5 in the morning and doesn't get home until evening — sometimes he's out in the Gulf for two or three days at a stretch. On those days, it's just the kids and me. I'm still breastfeeding. I haven't slept a full night in months.

I love my children. But I won't pretend this is what I chose. I feel stagnant. I feel like I'm on pause. I have skills, education, and a real desire to contribute. Right now, none of that has anywhere to go.

No parent should have to choose between a career and raising their family. That shouldn't be the choice we're asking people to make.

## 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).