

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Tatum

This is my story.

Location:

Union City, Georgia

My Grown Up's Name:

James Jackson

“ We spent \$14,000 on child care in one year. It was our down payment on a house.



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 worked in early childhood education for 10 years. Now a curriculum specialist, I started as a preschool teacher. My wife Danielle works for the same organization on the family services side. We have two boys: Tristen, 6, and Tatum, 3. Two years ago, we spent \$14,000 on child care. It was our down payment for a house as we prepared to purchase a home after COVID.

Tristen has a tree nut allergy and asthma. One day, after a severe reaction, we rushed him to the nearest urgent care and were told we'd have to pay \$400 to \$500 out of pocket before he could be seen. Instead, we had to drive over an hour to the Children's Hospital of Atlanta. Thankfully, we had Medicaid, which has been a lifeline.

I see the affordability issue from both sides. I know what it costs families to access high-quality healthcare and child care, as well as what it costs to keep good teachers.

In my role, I help hire teachers. And I can tell you plainly: we are losing good people. We lose them to places like Chick-fil-A and Walmart, where the pay is the same or more, often with better hours and less stress. I understand why people make that choice. Many of the educators we hire have young children of their own. They are trying to make it work, just as the families we serve are. Staff cannot walk into a classroom and be fully present for children when they don't know if their job will exist next month. That is not a personal failure. It is a system problem when you are unsure whether you will be affected by the next government shutdown or funding cuts.

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).