

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Kashiv

This is my story.

Location:

Kailua, Hawai'i

My Grown Up's Name:

Suma Metla

“ A third of my monthly salary goes to child care. We live in a studio apartment. We are both physical therapists with advanced degrees.



When babies and families have the resources they need, like food, steady income, and safe housing, it keeps children on track and makes our country stronger. Federal policies play a critical role in the well-being of both babies and their caregivers, including through paid family and medical leave, financial supports, community services, immigration enforcement activities that prioritize babies' well-being, and effective child welfare prevention and intervention programs.

Our story begins...

I am a pediatric physical therapist and own a practice that serves primarily children from birth to 3. I spend my days helping families navigate early intervention services—explaining what their children need, supporting parents, and walking with them through some of the most stressful moments of early childhood.

My husband James is also a physical therapist. Our son Kashi turns two in May.

When Kashi was born, James had been severely injured at work just a month earlier when lifting a patient. He could barely sit up for the first four months of our son's life. I drove myself to the hospital to give birth. James couldn't hold Kashi, drive, or provide care in any sustained way.

My practice was growing rapidly. I was managing a business, a newborn, a partner in constant pain who would eventually have to leave clinical care, and my own postpartum complications that required a week-long hospitalization. Our families live in Florida.

During my pregnancy, families urged me to get on child care waitlists immediately. In Hawaii, they can stretch one to two years. Kashi has been in care since he was 4 months old. It costs about a third of my monthly salary. We live in a studio apartment because that is what we can afford.

I work with military families. Their child care is on a sliding scale based on income. Many dads receive 12 weeks of full paid leave. I am glad those families have that. I wish every family did.

IT'S TIME To Make Policy Change

Every day, families like mine are making hard choices about how to stretch a paycheck, between housing, food, and everything babies need. For some families like mine, added challenges like child welfare system involvement or the fear of being separated from loved ones make it even harder to stay stable. I'm asking Congress to invest in policies that help families like mine stay financially secure, safe, and stable.

We Want Congress to Support Strong Families by:

- Supporting paid family leave, the Child Tax Credit and other financial supports that make raising a baby more affordable.
- Protecting and investing in SNAP, TANF and SSBG, housing assistance like Housing Choice vouchers, and other programs that meet the basic needs of babies and families.
- Ceasing immigration enforcement operations in areas with young children present and avoiding family separations or detentions

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).