

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Charlie

This is my story.

Location:

Des Moines, Iowa

My Grown Up's Name:

Melissa

“ If we don't address what we pay the people who provide child care, we won't have anyone left to provide it.



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...

Charlie is 2½ years old. My partner Drew and I both work. I'm a middle school teacher, and he's an accountant. While many people would consider us middle-income earners, we still feel the pinch every month.

For Charlie's first two years, he was cared for by a woman who has run an in-home child care program for 40 years. She is one of only two nationally accredited in-home providers in Iowa. She recently had to start a GoFundMe to pay her mortgage. Her home was at risk of foreclosure. This woman—one of the most qualified child care providers in our state—could not pay her bills.

That broke my heart. It still does.

I work in education. I see what happens when children have access to strong early learning and what happens when they don't. I know the people caring for our youngest children are doing some of the most important work there is. And they cannot afford to live.

Charlie's current child care costs \$290 a week. That's at the lower end of what's available in Des Moines. I know families who pay far more. I know families who can't find a spot anywhere. And I know how much time and effort it takes just to find care, let alone afford it.

None of this is sustainable. The people who can change it need to hear from families like ours.

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).