

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Calypso

This is my story.

Location:

Romeoville, Illinois

My Grown Up's Name:

Magda

“ I have Medicaid, WIC, SNAP, food banks, and the support of my school district. I am using all of them. And I am still barely keeping up.



Federal policies play a critical role in the health and well-being of both babies and their caregivers, including through Medicaid, early intervention, mental health, and pediatric investments. By investing in the health and well-being of children and their families now, we can set them up for lifelong success, and the future success of our country.

Our story begins...

I am a developmental therapist. I help families in Will County get early intervention services for their children, and support parents through some of the hardest moments of raising a child.

My youngest daughter, Calypso, is 18 months old. She was born with hydrocephalus, which means there was extra fluid in her brain. Doctors placed a shunt, a small tube that drains the fluid and relieves pressure. During her stay in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), I drove 50 miles to the hospital in Chicago and 50 miles back home, while also caring for her two brothers.

Today, Calypso is walking, talking, and thriving. Early intervention made the difference. I know what these services make possible, and how families suffer when they can't access them.

We rely on Medicaid, which provides health coverage for low-income families; WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, which helps with food and nutrition; and SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which helps families afford groceries. We also turn to food banks and support from our local school district.

I know these systems inside and out. I help other families use them every day. I serve on a parent board. I am doing everything I can. And it is still not enough.

The first three years of life are the most important for a child's brain development. That is not the time to pull back on these lifeline supports.

IT'S TIME To Make Policy Change

Families like mine are doing everything we can to keep our babies healthy, but it's not always easy to find affordable care or get the support we need. When appointments are delayed or services aren't available, for me or my baby, it affects children for the rest of their lives. That's why I'm asking Congress to invest in programs that make sure caregivers and babies like mine can access reliable care from the very beginning.

We Want Congress to Support Good Health by:

- Opposing cuts to Medicaid to ensure babies and those who care for them can access the care they need for a strong, healthy start.
- Increasing funding for early intervention through Medicaid and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C to ensure young children stay on track.
- Increasing investment in early childhood health and mental health, including through SAMHSA's Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Grant Program and Project LAUNCH, HRSA's Early Childhood Development Expert program and HRSA's Transforming Pediatrics for Early Childhood.

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).