

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

**Draxton**

This is my story.

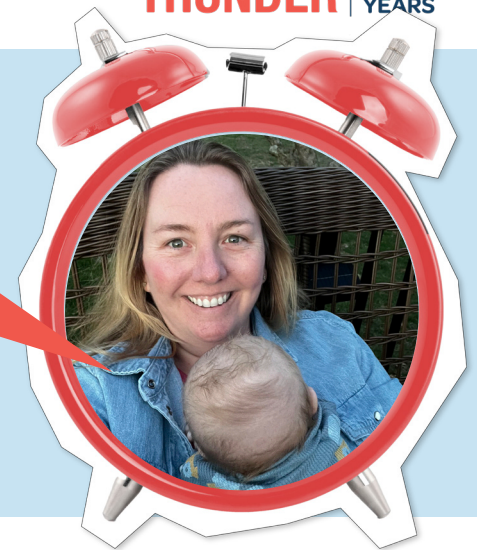
**Location:**

**Georgetown, Indiana**

**My Grown Up's Name:**

**Shelby**

“ We need more families willing to foster. But we can't keep asking them to absorb the full weight alone.



**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...

My husband Josh and I have two daughters—Claire, 8, and Carly, 5. We are also foster parents.

Julius was our first foster child, and he came to us at 7 months old. There is little to no support for infants in the foster care system. Getting Julius the resources he needed was practically a job in itself. We asked about counseling, but we couldn't get it. When Julius went back with his mom, my girls were really sad.

When the call came about 4-week-old Draxton, we initially said no. We work full-time. I'm a nurse in an educator role. And we had no child care plan for a weeks old baby. Most child care centers won't take infants that young. There is no Family Medical Leave Act provision for foster parents.

But we took in Draxton, who is now 3 months old. There were moments when we questioned whether we could do it. Indiana has about 10,000 children in foster care. We need more families willing to say yes. But we cannot ask families to take on that responsibility without better support, especially child care and emotional support for infants who need safe, consistent care from the start, and the families who care for them.

I am a nurse. I know what those early months mean for a child's development. We cannot keep asking foster families to figure it out on their own.

## 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.

### 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).