

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

**STROLLING THUNDER** 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

**Archie**

This is my story.

**Location:**

**Kansas City, Kansas**

**My Grown Up's Name:**

**Davinya Hinojosa**

“ The resources exist, but families who need them the most don't know it.



**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 have been a mother for almost three decades. I have eight children—four boys and four girls—and five are still at home. My youngest is Archie, who is two. My oldest at home is Faith, who is 14. My daughter Valeria is 11. She has autism, global developmental delay, ADHD, and developmental language disorder. When people hear that, they expect a story about struggle. That is not our story.

Valeria is kind, calm, and thriving. She is doing better than many of her typically developing peers. The difference is early intervention.

I noticed something was different when she was 9 months old. I told her doctor. We were fortunate to live five minutes from the University of Kansas, which has strong research programs in infant and toddler development. Valeria was evaluated and began receiving services at 2. She was enrolled in Head Start. We participated in research studies. We had access to speech therapy, occupational therapy, and developmental specialists—support during the years that matter most. That access changed everything. Those early years built the foundation she stands on today.

I kept asking myself why our family was doing well when so many others were struggling. The answer was access to programs, services, and information. Too many families don't have that. Many families don't even know these programs exist.

I am now completing a certificate in leadership and education for neurodevelopmental disabilities at the University of Kansas. I want other families to have the same chance we did.

## 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).