

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Irvin

This is my story.

Location:

Louisville, Kentucky

My Grown Up's Name:

Asya

“ Parent trauma is real. I didn't know how much of a toll it takes until I was in the middle of 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...

Before Irvin was born, we knew something was different. Doctors found an enlarged kidney during my pregnancy. After he arrived, came the diagnoses: focal epilepsy, infantile spasms, breathing and feeding difficulties. A kidney with a tumor was removed. And now he has Wilms' Tumor, a form of kidney cancer. He is just over a year old.

La'Baron works 12-hour shifts to keep our family afloat. I left my job as a teacher's assistant to care for Irvin and our two daughters, who are 8 and 9. We applied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) but were denied, so we hired a lawyer to help us get approved. Kentucky's waitlist for pediatric physical therapy is six to eight months. So, we drive to Cincinnati, 2.5 hours each way, twice a month. The next day, we drive nearly two hours to Lexington for neurology appointments.

Through it all, Irvin smiles. He reaches up and puts his little hand on your face. He has three teeth now. He hugs you back. Watching him fight keeps our family moving.

We now have SSI. WIC, the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, helps with food. And we have a supportive family.

But the waitlists are too long, the resources too hard to get, and parents are carrying more than anyone sees. Parent trauma is real. And when a child needs this much, everything in a family's life reorganizes around that need, including siblings who must learn the signs of a seizure.

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).