

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Robin

This is my story.

Location:

Elkton, Maryland

My Grown Up's Name:

Stacia Bourne

“ I put Robin on child care waitlists at 5 weeks pregnant. She is 18 months old, and we have not received a single call.



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...

I have a PhD in developmental psychology with a focus on children. I know the research on early childhood better than most. The primary reason my husband, Michael, and I had our second child was that my 64-year-old mother retired and moved from Idaho to Maryland to care for her. We couldn't afford two children in childcare. I put my daughter, Robin, on waitlists when I was 5 weeks pregnant. She is now 18 months old, and we still haven't received a call. Even the school where our 5-year-old, George, was enrolled couldn't offer her priority as a sibling. That is how inaccessible quality childcare is where we live.

When Robin was 11 weeks old, she developed ulcerating hemangiomas, which are open wounds that required twice-weekly hospital visits, around-the-clock pain management, and medications timed to her feedings. I was on paid academic leave, and our out-of-pocket maximum had been met through childbirth, so we didn't have to think about cost. We could focus on her.

I know that isn't most families' reality. I know parents whose babies were in the same kind of pain, waiting weeks for a specialist. I know how hard it was for me—with my education, my insurance, and my professional network—to navigate the postpartum health care system.

For families with fewer resources, those gaps don't get filled. They just go without. The only reason my family looks the way it does is because of my mother's sacrifice. That should not be what it takes.

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).