

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, we're babies

Joseph and Kalani

This is our story.

Location:

Waterville, Maine

Our Grown Up's Name:

Alicia Quirk

“ A child's future shouldn't depend on whether their parent is stubborn enough to fight the system.



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 raising three young children, each with complex medical and developmental needs. My daughter Avianna, 4, has been diagnosed with ADHD. My son Joseph, 2, has been diagnosed with autism, epilepsy, a genetic condition, and developmental delays. He also depends on oxygen. My youngest, Kalani, 8 months old, came home from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) on oxygen.

My days are shaped by appointments, therapies, and constant coordination — but also by something else: fighting systems that are supposed to help us.

Trying to access the mental health and developmental services my children need has been exhausting. I have faced denials, delays, and providers who don't show up as scheduled. I have had to repeatedly prove that my children need support. That takes an emotional toll that is hard to put into words.

My children are not defined by their diagnoses. Avianna is smart and funny, but she is also struggling with behaviors that can become unsafe when she doesn't have the right support. Joseph used to have no way to communicate his needs. After finally receiving consistent early intervention services, he can now walk to me, take my hand, and show me what he needs.

Mental health and early intervention services are not extras for our family. They are what make stability possible. Families like mine should not have to fight this hard for care that we know works.

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).