

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Nico

This is my story.

Location:

Manistee, Michigan

My Grown Up's Name:

Luci Schweigert

“ The therapists truly love my son. They tell him so. Having people that dedicated to your kid — there's nothing like 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...

We live in a small town in Northern Michigan. My husband teaches middle and high school science. I run my own social media and marketing business from home. We have two sons — Bowie, 5, and Nico, 2 ½. Bowie has autism and is minimally verbal.

When I first noticed that Bowie's speech wasn't developing as I expected, I brought it up with his pediatrician. She connected us to a program called Early On — a free, state-funded early intervention program that sent certified speech pathologists directly to our home. No cost. No waitlist nightmare. Just people who showed up, loved our son, and helped him find his way.

Bowie is now in a general education preschool. He is still receiving services. He is thriving. And I genuinely don't know where he would be without those early years of support.

Here's what I keep telling every parent I meet: most people have never heard of these programs. They notice something that feels a little off with their child's development, and they just wait. They assume it'll resolve. They don't know that free, in-home help is available — sometimes right in their own county.

And here's what I've seen firsthand: when state representatives didn't even know what an early intervention program did, it got cut. Advocates spoke up. Funding came back. That is exactly why stories like ours need to reach the people making these decisions.

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).