

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

**STROLLING THUNDER** 10 YEARS

Hi, we're babies

**Jada and Nia**

This our my story.

**Location:**

**Raytown, Missouri**

**Our Grown Up's Name:**

**Ellysia Dunn**

“ I'm working to build a stable future for my daughters. I just need systems that help make that possible.



**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'm 23, a full-time college student, and a single mom to two daughters. Jada is 2. Nia is 1. Nia has a rare genetic condition called a KIF-11 disorder. She also has developmental delays and seizures. When I first raised concerns, I was told she would grow out of it. But at 10 months, she still wasn't sitting up. I knew something wasn't right, so I kept pushing. Eventually, she had an MRI of her brain and genetic testing. That's when we got answers.

Getting that diagnosis wasn't easy. I was caring for a baby with complex needs, raising a toddler, and trying to stay in school.

Since then, we've built a care team—physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. They've helped me understand what Nia needs and how to support her. She is starting a therapeutic preschool this summer. It is the only program nearby that will accept a child with her needs. Child care remains our biggest challenge.

Because Nia has seizures, I can't leave her with just anyone. I need someone who is trained and knows what to do in an emergency. There is only one therapeutic preschool in my area that will take her, and she starts in June. There's just one option.

What I need is simple: safe, reliable child care with the right training, and early support for children without long waits or barriers.

I'm working to build a stable future for my daughters. I just need systems that help make that possible.

## 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).