

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Skylar

This is my story.

Location:

Omaha, Nebraska

My Grown Up's Name:

Monica

“ Child care costs are the one thing standing between us and growing our family the way we always hoped.



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 am an education coach. Every day, I walk into classrooms with children from birth to three and see how quality early learning helps them. I know the research. I believe in it. And I am deeply aware that my own 1-year-old, Skylar, is not in it.

Skylar stays with her uncle while I work. He is generous and wonderful, and we pay him what we can. She is loved. But it is not the structured early learning environment her twin sisters, Parker and Briar, had—and I know that difference matters.

The twins got into the preschool program at the school where I work. We got lucky. If that had not happened, if we had to pay for child care for three children at once, it would have cost more than my mortgage. We would have gone bankrupt.

The program I work with serves families at the highest level of need. I believe in that. But I also see how families just above that line—families like mine—have no equivalent option. We earn too much to qualify, yet not enough to afford all that we need.

My husband, Gage, and I want another child. But are costs are the one thing standing in the way. I say it all the time: if child care were free, I would have a million kids. That is how much the cost of care shapes our decisions.

No one should have to decide how many children they can afford to love.

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).