

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

**STROLLING THUNDER** 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

**Ember**

This is my story.

**Location:**

**Conway, New Hampshire**

**My Grown Up's Name:**

**Nichole Murphy**

“ I looked for a therapist. No callback. I tried parent-child therapy for Gary. Again—no callback. I just kept trying and kept moving.



**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 have been doing this on my own since before Gary was born. He is 5 now. My daughter Ember is 1½. I work in early intervention, helping other families navigate the same systems I am navigating myself. It's been both a lifeline and a mirror.

When I found out I was pregnant with Gary, I moved back in with family. Eventually, I got into income-based housing and secured a child care scholarship. My job gives me the flexibility I need, because in a rural area, when your child is sick, a deadline hits, or DHS needs a call, there is no one else to do it.

After I had Gary, I came home alone and in pain—without even Tylenol, because I hadn't thought that far. Everyone talks about the baby. Nobody talks about the mother. I later learned I was experiencing postpartum rage. I looked for a therapist. No callback. I tried parent-child therapy for Gary. Again—no callback. I just kept trying and kept moving.

When Ember was born, I applied for a child care scholarship right away. It took several months to get it. In the meantime, I paid out of pocket, called everyone I knew, and watched bills pile up.

I have worked three jobs at once, and still didn't qualify for help. A community health worker told me to drop a job so I could qualify. That isn't a productive system. It's one that punishes you for working and makes stability harder to reach.

## 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).