

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Henry

This is my story.

Location:

Santa Fe, New Mexico

My Grown Up's Name:

Meghan Montelibano

“ The right provider— someone who shows up consistently and builds trust—can change everything for a family.



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...

My first son, Christopher, was born in 2021 during COVID with a severe airway condition. He had laryngomalacia, which affected his ability to breathe, and he couldn't safely be in group child care. As a first-time mom, I struggled with severe postpartum depression, anxiety, and OCD while trying to care for a child with complex medical needs. We had no built-in support system. I didn't know where to turn.

When Christopher wasn't hitting milestones and wasn't talking, our doctor suggested Early Intervention—a publicly funded program for babies and toddlers that checks development and provides a range of therapies and support for families.

It changed everything. At first, it wasn't the right fit. I spoke up and we found a speech-language pathologist who connected with him—and with me. She came every week. She was trusted, and consistent. She didn't just support Christopher, she supported our whole family.

Christopher didn't speak until he was 4 years old. Today, he is talking. Early Intervention didn't just help my son find his voice. It helped me find mine, too.

Now my younger son, Henry, is starting work with a speech therapist, an occupational therapist and a development specialist through early intervention. I know what that path looks like and how critical early access is.

That experience also led me to create Santa Fam, a community that connects parents to resources and to each other, so no one has to navigate this alone. Early Intervention is not optional. It is essential—for children, for families, and for their futures.

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).