

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Theo

This is my story.

Location:

Reno, Nevada

My Grown Up's Name:

Vanessa

“ My professional life is organized around my son's child care calendar. My employment is completely tied to his care.



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...

When my son Theo's in-home child care provider cut her hours, I understood. After more than 30 years in the field, she wanted a better work-life balance to spend more time with her family.

My husband Nathan and I don't have family nearby and couldn't secure another child care spot quickly due to long waitlists. We were able to enroll Theo in preschool two days a week, so I left my full-time job and shifted to consulting with the same company during those hours.

I have a master's degree in human development and family science and years of experience in early childhood education. I know what high-quality care looks like. Without it, I still cannot fully participate in the workforce. When I don't have care, during school breaks or sick days, I build my days around my kids — setting up activities, keeping them engaged, doing what I know supports their development.

Theo will soon start full-time preschool, which is a great place, though extremely expensive. But it means I can work full-time, so I'm interviewing again.

My older son Levi just turned 6. For his birthday, he chose Vietnamese food, and we discovered that Theo loves pot stickers. I recently went out of town for a training and found a folded drawing in my bag — Levi and I holding hands with a heart around us.

These moments are everything. And what I'm asking for is simple: a child care system that lets you show up for those moments and still have a career.

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).