

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, we're babies

Reign and Phoenix

This is our story.

Location:

New York, New York

Our Grown Up's Name:

Brandon

“ My wife cries because Reign had the opportunity to learn early. Phoenix is going to a babysitter with the TV all day.



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...

Hi, my name is Brandon, and I'm here from New York. My wife, Sphinx, is a disabled Army veteran and a graduate student. I work in youth development, supporting children and families. We have two young sons—Reign, who's 3, and Phoenix, who's 1. By most measures, we're doing everything right. But we're still struggling to get the support we need to build the future we want for our family.

We recently received Reign's developmental evaluation. The evaluator said these were areas for growth, like fine motor skills and emotional regulation. Still, reading words like "below average" and "poor" about your child is hard to take. He's bright, verbal, and curious. We want him to thrive.

Last year, we stretched to pay \$18,500 for a high-quality early learning program for him, just two days a week. It was a screen-free environment with a strong curriculum, and we saw the difference. He was using sign language before he could speak and was more engaged. We can't afford that for our youngest. He's with a babysitter we trust, but the environment is different, and we're concerned about the impact on his development at this stage.

We applied for child care assistance but didn't qualify. If my wife were working instead of pursuing her degree, or if we weren't a two-parent household, we would qualify.

Families like ours aren't the exception. We're working, making responsible choices, and trying to build something better for our kids. We shouldn't be shut out because of it.

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).