

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm Baby

Delta

This is my story.

Location:

Deer Island, Oregon

My Grown Up's Name:

Anastasia Rigby

“ We live in what every agency in our area calls a child care desert. It took us nine months to find someone we trusted.



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 didn't plan to spend the first years of my daughter's life disabled. But when Delta was between 2 and 3 ½ years old, I was diagnosed with stage 4 endometriosis. I had a hysterectomy and 20% of my diaphragm removed.

The surgery was out of my insurance network. We sold belongings to pay for it ourselves. My husband's income held our family together. I subbed at a school once a week to feel like I was contributing. During all of that, we had no child care.

We are in Columbia County, which is known as a child care desert. The few options available are inflexible, unaffordable and staffed by people who do not understand the needs of young children. We had no extended family nearby. It was isolating and exhausting.

For nine months, I searched. Asking anyone who might know someone. It took us nine months of searching — mom groups, texts, social media posts, asking anyone who would listen — before we finally found someone who runs an in-home child care, takes only a small number of kids, and was willing to work with what we could afford.

But we found this option by chance. A friend of a friend. A connection that could have easily never happened. There was no system that guided us. No resource list. No county office that said, "Here is what's available, here is what fits your situation." It was just luck. That is not good enough. Not for our family, not for any family.

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).