

It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

Abdiel

This is my story.

Location:

Providence, Rhode Island

My Grown Up's Name:

Arlette Hidalgo

“ I am working. I am contributing. My child deserves the same opportunities as any other child.



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...

My husband Jose and I live in Rhode Island with our son Abdiel, who is almost 2. Because our families are in the Dominican Republic, we are on our own here. No grandparents nearby, no one to call when Abdiel is sick and I have work, no extra help when something unexpected comes up.

I am a school administrator and former special education teacher. I advocate for families every day. I understand complex systems and help families navigate them to access the services they need. Even so, I still ran into obstacles when I applied for child care assistance. I made a mistake on the application and inadvertently landed my husband in child support court. We had to go to court to correct the error.

In the end, we didn't qualify for subsidies. We earn too much to qualify for the help, but not enough to feel financially secure. So, I pay \$250 a week for a home-based child care provider because I want Abdiel in a place where Spanish is spoken, where his culture is understood, and where he feels like he belongs.

Access to high-quality, affordable child care should not be treated as a benefit only for families in extreme poverty. I am working. I am contributing. My child deserves the same opportunities as any other child. All families deserve this. But right now, too many of us are left to figure it out on our own.

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).