

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

**Jeremiah**

This is my story.

**Location:**

**Mount Pleasant, South Carolina**

**My Grown Up's Name:**

**Megan**

“ There are maybe three providers in our area who work with children this young. The waitlist for a developmental evaluation is a year long.



**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...

By day, I navigate the healthcare system as a hospital social worker, helping families access resources and advocate for what they need during some of the hardest moments of their lives. But when it came to my own son, Jeremiah, I found myself on the other side of a broken system.

Jeremiah is almost 2. I went through my pregnancy alone, experienced a near-death scare with him during his first week of life, and returned to work when he was just 8 weeks old. From early on, he struggled with feeding issues. Then came sensory concerns, anxiety, emotional regulation challenges, and early signs of ADHD. Even with my professional experience, I spent months trying to find the right support—a therapist, child psychologist, or anyone who works with children under 5. Most waitlists for autism or ADHD evaluations are close to a year long.

Eventually, we connected with BabyNet, an early intervention program that provides occupational and speech therapy. His providers come to his school, which helps enormously because I don't have to leave work to get him care.

I have a good job. I have health insurance. I have a flexible supervisor. I have my mother and sister nearby. And it is still this hard to get my child the help he needs. My parenting journey highlights a sobering reality: If a hospital social worker with resources and support struggles to navigate this system, I cannot imagine what it feels like for families without those advantages.

## 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).