

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

**STROLLING THUNDER** 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

**Jaxon**

This is my story.

**Location:**

**Jacksboro, Tennessee**

**My Grown Up's Name:**

**Hannah**

“ My entire paycheck goes to Jaxon's needs. Sammy's covers rent and everything else. There is not much left over.



**When babies and families have the resources they need, like food, steady income, and safe housing, it keeps children on track and makes our country stronger. Federal policies play a critical role in the well-being of both babies and their caregivers, including through paid family and medical leave, financial supports, community services, immigration enforcement activities that prioritize babies' well-being, and effective child welfare prevention and intervention programs.**

## Our story begins...

Two days before I gave birth to my son Jaxon, our house flooded. Everything was ruined. The next day, my doctor said my preeclampsia was severe. I was told to head to the hospital to be induced.

My husband, Sam, returned to work a week after Jaxon was born. We needed the money. The bills were piling up, and we don't have paid leave. I was learning to care for a newborn, recovering from a medical emergency, and doing it mostly alone.

Jaxon is almost 1 now. I manage a boutique. I am a full-time student finishing my degree in medical coding and billing, graduating in August with honors. Sam works six days a week as a warehouse manager.

My entire paycheck goes toward Jaxon's needs, while Sam's covers everything else. We make it work, but there's no room for extras. Jaxon has gastroesophageal reflux disease, which affects how he digests food, so he needs a special formula that costs \$60 for a 14-ounce can. One can last two days. WIC—the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, which helps families afford food and formula—makes that possible.

I drop Jaxon off at 7:45 a.m. and don't see him again until 7:30 p.m. I am sacrificing time with my son and my husband. Jaxon's child care is nearly \$800 a month. I have been on the child care assistance waitlist since August.

I would not change my family for anything. But I want us to thrive, not just endure.

## IT'S TIME To Make Policy Change

Every day, families like mine are making hard choices about how to stretch a paycheck, between housing, food, and everything babies need. For some families like mine, added challenges like child welfare system involvement or the fear of being separated from loved ones make it even harder to stay stable. I'm asking Congress to invest in policies that help families like mine stay financially secure, safe, and stable.

### We Want Congress to Support Strong Families by:

- Supporting paid family leave, the Child Tax Credit and other financial supports that make raising a baby more affordable.
- Fully funding HRSA's Infant-Toddler Court Program to help ensure young children at risk of child welfare involvement can find safe, permanent homes.
- Protecting and investing in SNAP, TANF and SSBG, housing assistance like Housing Choice vouchers, and other programs that meet the basic needs of babies and families.
- Ceasing immigration enforcement operations in areas with young children present and avoiding family separations or detentions

**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).