

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

**STROLLING THUNDER** 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm Baby

**Lamin**

This is my story.

**Location:**

**Middleton, Wisconsin**

**My Grown Up's Name:**

**Binta Ceesay**

“ The child care subsidy disappears the moment my husband works overtime. I can't take a job that doesn't pay enough to cover the care for two kids.



**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...

Before I had children, I was always on the move. I started my workday at 7 AM so I could leave by 3:30 PM and still make it to the library to run after-school programs. I served on women's initiative committees. I volunteered at food pantries and with immigrant community organizations. I gave everything I had to every room I was in.

Then I had my daughter, Muna. Not long after, I got sick. When she was 7 months old, I was diagnosed with an autoimmune condition. My job ended. A few months later, I found out I was pregnant again. My son, Lamin, was born with sickle cell disease.

For three years, I have been trying to get back to work. I apply for everything. But the math never works. The child care subsidy we qualify for disappears the moment my husband, Musa, earns overtime. And the jobs I'm offered don't pay enough to cover the cost of child care for two children.

I am training to become a doula. I am studying to be a court interpreter. I still host the annual International Women's Day event for my community. This will be my sixth year. I have not stopped. But the system has made it nearly impossible for me to have a career and contribute in the way I know I can.

I wanted these children. I prayed for them. I also want a life filled with purpose. Those two things should not be in conflict.

## 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).