

# It's Time For Congress To Invest In Babies

STROLLING THUNDER 10 YEARS

Hi, I'm baby

**Elanora**

This is my story.

**Location:**

**Parkersburg, West Virginia**

**My Grown Up's Name:**

**Raine**

“ These programs are not extras. They are what make it possible for me to go to work, for my husband to be healthy and present, and for our children to grow up in a safe and stable home.



**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...

I'm a program supervisor for a statewide in-home early education program in West Virginia. My team works with families—modeling healthy parent-child interactions, connecting them to services, and helping them navigate systems. I have sat in on court cases and doctors' appointments with the families I serve.

I know what support looks like when it shows up. I also know what it looks like when it doesn't—because I've lived it.

My husband Sam stays home with our 2-year-old daughter, Ella, and helps care for our 5-year-old son, Ezekiel, and my 12-year-old sister, Maci, who has been in our custody for about a year and a half.

When Ella was born, my husband's mental health took a serious turn. He was later diagnosed with bipolar disorder and panic disorder. During that time, we had to fight to get and keep Medicaid. Repeated clerical errors at our Department of Health and Human Resources frustrated our efforts. At one point, I had to go there in person four times in two weeks because something was entered or removed incorrectly each time.

At the same time, Macy is diabetic, and we were trying to make sure her insulin would be covered. We got it sorted. But it took a lot.

Medicaid is what allowed my husband to access therapy and medication. That treatment is what makes it possible for him to care for our children and my sister every day.

These programs are not extras. They are what make families like mine possible.

## 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).