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**Nevada Family to Advocate for Babies and Toddlers in Fifth Annual *Strolling Thunder***

*Las Vegas parent and baby to bring crucial issues including paid leave and affordable quality child care to Congress*

*Las Vegas, Nevada, May 18, 2021* – From Nevada to Washington, DC, the issues that impact babies are building momentum. Now, a local mother from Las Vegas will join family advocates from every state in the nation as part of the fifth annual [Strolling Thunder](#) event to bring this message to Congress.

*Strolling Thunder* connects families and babies from every state and Washington, D.C. with their Members of Congress to share their experiences raising young children and what policies and programs could help their babies thrive. This year, family advocates and their babies will meet with their elected officials through virtual meetings, bringing them into their homes and their worlds. *Strolling Thunder* is organized by [ZERO TO THREE](#), the country's leading early childhood development nonprofit dedicated to ensuring all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life.

Nevada will be represented this year by Kelly Bumgarner and her baby, 10 month old Miriam. Bumgarner is advocating for affordable childcare and family leave—two things her family struggled without during the pandemic. “When Miriam was born, my husband and I planned to send her to the same early childhood education center our older child attended. But that facility closed early in the pandemic and never reopened, so we were faced with trying to find another affordable and safe facility during a crisis. Because Nevada doesn’t require any kind of family leave, we had to search for childcare while working full-time and trying to bond with a brand new baby. Even a short reprieve from work to focus on our family would have been a big help.”

“Investments in high quality early learning experiences for children can yield a fifteen fold return on investment, not to mention have the potential to change a child’s trajectory by giving them the foundation for a life of success,” adds Annette Dawson, School Readiness Policy Director.

ZERO TO THREE Chief Policy Officer [Myra Jones-Taylor](#) stated,

“Babies’ brains are built. When we invest in the infrastructure they need to thrive, we’re investing in our success as a nation, both now and in the future. I’m eternally inspired by our family advocates who are standing up to fight not only for their babies, but families just like them everywhere. Only when we ensure equitable opportunity for every baby to reach their full potential will we be able to build a strong foundation for our country, and that work will be led by parents and caregivers like these. We look forward to partnering with our *Strolling Thunder* families to help Congress *Think Babies* and advance policies to help infants, toddlers, and their families thrive.”

Since 2017, *Strolling Thunder* has supported constituent families and their babies in meeting with their elected officials – from state capitals to Capitol Hill – to share their experiences about raising young children and what they need to support their babies' healthy development. The event is a cornerstone of ZERO TO THREE's [Think Babies](#), a national movement and a call to action for policymakers to prioritize the needs of infants, toddlers, and their families and to invest in our nation's future. Federal priorities include:

- Increasing access to high-quality, affordable child care;
- Creating a national paid family and medical leave program;
- Increasing investments in Early Head Start so that more families living in poverty can benefit from the program's comprehensive services;
- Increasing support for infant and early childhood mental health services;
- Providing support to transform the child welfare system; and
- Making the expanded Child Tax Credit permanent to increase families' economic security.

Locally, the Strong Start Nevada PN-3 Initiative plans and projects to expand family support services to more than 38,000 low-income infants, toddlers, and their families. These services include the utilization of maternal and child health development programs, quality early learning programs, and individualized family support services for pregnant individuals, infants, and toddlers. Children's Advocacy Alliance is a backbone agency fostering collaboration across a number of nonprofit and government entities to do this work.

*Think Babies* is also currently supporting advocacy organizations in 21 states to advance infant-toddler priorities at the state level, and partners in eight states hold *Strolling Thunder* events each year to focus on local legislative priorities. *Strolling Thunder* replay can be viewed on [ZERO TO THREE's Facebook page](#).

Since its inception, *Strolling Thunder* has become one of the most anticipated advocacy events on Capitol Hill. The event has driven increased advocacy and political will for infant-toddler issues, drawing more than 6,500 families and advocates at events across the country and more than 700 visits with policymakers on both sides of the aisle.

During their meetings, family advocates will rely on data from the recently released [State of Babies Yearbook](#), which bridges the gap between science and policy with national and state-by-state data on the well-being of America's babies. The 2021 edition of the *Yearbook* provides an in-depth look into the experience of our nation's babies and their families. It also explores substantial disparities and inequities in their experience when examined by race/ethnicity, income, and geographic setting. Findings include:

- 40 percent of babies nationwide live in poverty or low income, placing the U.S. 33<sup>rd</sup> for child poverty among 38 other nations. This includes nearly 19 percent of the nation's 11.5 million babies who were living in outright poverty. Nevada is just higher than this national average with roughly 43 percent of babies living in poverty.
- When a family is living with low income, they're less likely to obtain preventative care or developmental screening for their babies; more likely to live in crowded housing, unsafe

neighborhoods, or move frequently; and their children are more likely to have multiple adverse early experiences.

- Roughly 19 percent of Nevada’s infants and toddlers have had at least one adverse childhood experience. Nearly eight percent of infants and toddlers nationwide have already had two or more adverse experiences, defined as potentially traumatic events such as experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home or community; or growing up in a household with substance use problems or instability.
- Infant care is too expensive for many families, exceeding the cost of college tuition in more than half of states. Only 16 states allow child care subsidies for families with incomes over 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and just 4 percent of families with low or moderate income that could use help with paying for child care receive a subsidy.
- Only 11 percent of those income-eligible infants and toddlers have access to Early Head Start, where families can get comprehensive child development and family support services. The proportion served varies from 3 percent to 23 percent across states.

Families can learn more about ZERO TO THREE’s *Think Babies*, as well as how they can get involved to advocate on behalf of their own children and their communities, at [thinkbabies.org](http://thinkbabies.org).

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#### **About ZERO TO THREE**

*ZERO TO THREE works to ensure all babies and toddlers benefit from the family and community connections critical to their well-being and development. Since 1977, the organization has advanced the proven power of nurturing relationships by transforming the science of early childhood into helpful resources, practical tools, and responsive policies for millions of parents, professionals and policymakers.*

*For more information, and to learn how to become a ZERO TO THREE member, please visit [zerotothree.org](http://zerotothree.org), [facebook.com/zerotothree](https://facebook.com/zerotothree), or follow [@zerotothree](https://twitter.com/zerotothree) on Twitter.*

#### **About the Children’s Advocacy Alliance**

*The Children’s Advocacy Alliance (CAA) is a community-based nonprofit organization that advocates for policy changes that benefit Nevada’s children and families by researching and utilizing current data and promoting evidence-based policies to ensure that every child has a chance to thrive. CAA engages the community by bringing people together to address challenges and opportunities around children’s issues to leverage collective strength toward improving the systems that support the well-being of Nevada’s children. For more information, visit [www.caanv.org](http://www.caanv.org).*