

Media Advisory

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Strolling Thunder Rhode Island: **Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Brings Families with Babies and Toddlers to the State House, Asking Policymakers to Make Young Children a Priority**

*Advocacy focus for Strolling Thunder 2019 include improvements the paid family leave program;
funding for child care, State Pre-K, and family home visiting*

PROVIDENCE, RI (April 25, 2019) — **Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**, in partnership with **ZERO TO THREE**, is organizing a major advocacy event to bring approximately 40 Rhode Island families with babies and toddlers to the State House. ***Strolling Thunder Rhode Island*** will take place on **Wednesday, May 1, 2019** from **1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.** *Strolling Thunder™* is the flagship advocacy event of the *Think Babies™* campaign, part of a national campaign designed to bring attention to the many issues that affect what babies and families need to thrive. This is the second annual *Strolling Thunder Rhode Island* – [please click here](#) to see pictures from the inaugural event last year.

Strolling Thunder Rhode Island Activities — Please join us for any and all of this exciting event, and join the conversation on social media with #StrollingThunderRI and #ThinkBabies!

- **1:00 p.m.** Families will meet at the Rhode Island Convention Center for lunch, stroller decorating, and opening remarks.
- **1:45 p.m.** Families will stroll from the Convention Center to the State House on Francis Street and Smith Street. A Providence Police escort will accompany families the entire way.
- **2:15 p.m.** Families will arrive at the front of the State House (Smith Street)
- **2:30 p.m.** Families will enjoy Child Care Awareness Day, which will take place all afternoon at the State House. Families will gather in the Bell Room at the State House, which will be transformed into a pop-up early learning classroom, donated by Kaplan Early Learning.

Families will also meet with Rhode Island state legislators and elected officials to share their story.
- **3:30 p.m.** There will be a brief speaking program on child care policy in the rotunda, and performance(s) by talented young Rhode Islanders
- **4:00 p.m.** Families will be introduced on the floor of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

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Advocacy Focus for Strolling Thunder Rhode Island 2019 – funding for child care, State Pre-K, and family home visiting; improvements to the state’s paid Family leave program

This year’s *Strolling Thunder Rhode Island* is focusing on four key policy areas to help families with young children: high quality child care, pre-k, family home visiting, and paid family leave. We urge the General Assembly to increase funding for the Child Care Assistance Program to bring rates up to the federal benchmark for quality, to sustain and expand our high-quality Pre-K program, to invest state funds to sustain proven family home visiting models, and to make important changes to our state’s Paid Family Leave program to enable families to take recommended leaves to care for babies.

Many Rhode Island families with babies and young children rely on these state-funded and managed programs that build a strong foundation for lifetime success.

About the national *Think Babies*™ campaign

Strolling Thunder™ is the flagship advocacy event of the *Think Babies*™ campaign, part of a national campaign designed to bring attention to the many issues that affect what babies and families need to thrive. Key campaign priorities include: quality, affordable child care; time for parents to bond with their babies; healthy emotional development; and strong physical health and nutrition. Our goal is to bring statewide attention to what babies — and families — need to thrive.

Areas of focus for *Think Babies* campaigns include:

- Increasing access to affordable, quality child care for infants and toddlers;
- Ensuring access to paid family leave policies;
- Increasing access to infant and early childhood mental health services;
- Ensuring access to voluntary, evidence-based home visiting for families with infants and toddlers; and
- Increasing access to child and family screenings, supports and linkages to needed services.
- Increasing access to healthy nutrition and obesity prevention initiatives for infants and toddlers.

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About Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.

Learn more at www.rikidscount.org, and connect on social media: [@RIKIDSCOUNT](https://twitter.com/RIKIDSCOUNT) on Twitter, and [@RhodeIslandKIDSCOUNT](https://www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandKIDSCOUNT) on Facebook.

About Think Babies

ZERO TO THREE created the Think Babies campaign to make the potential of every baby a national priority.

When we Think Babies and invest in infants, toddlers, and their families, we ensure a strong future for us all. Learn more at thinkbabies.org.