

News Release

For Immediate Distribution



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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and ZERO TO THREE Ask Policymakers to Make Infants and Toddlers a Priority

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT selected to lead Rhode Island's Think Babies™ campaign to bring attention to what babies and families need to thrive.

PROVIDENCE, RI (March 26, 2018) — Rhode Island KIDS COUNT was one of six child advocacy organizations in the country that was selected by ZERO TO THREE to lead Rhode Island's *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.

"The science is clear – our brains grow faster between the ages of 0 and 3 than at any other point in our lives," said ZERO TO THREE Executive Director Matthew Melmed. "Babies' brains form more than one million new neural connections every second. When babies don't get what their growing brains need during this crucial time, it can lead to life-long developmental, educational, social, and health challenges. When we *Think Babies* and invest in infants, toddlers and their families, we ensure a strong future for us all."

This year marks the first time that ZERO TO THREE will partner with leading children's advocacy organizations in six states to bring *Think Babies* closer to home. **The other states selected for this initiative include Colorado, Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Washington.**

"We're thrilled to partner with ZERO TO THREE on the *Think Babies* campaign – and the timing couldn't be better," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Executive Director. "Rhode Island is fortunate to have a strong network of early childhood advocates working together to support young children's learning and development. *Think Babies* builds on that momentum. Rhode Island's prosperity depends on the strongest possible start for young children, and we're excited to carry this work forward with our committed early childhood partners."

Among the initial activities of the *Think Babies* campaign will be Rhode Island's 'Strolling Thunder' event on May 16, 2018, which will bring babies and their families from across the state to the State House for an advocacy event.

Other partners for *Think Babies* state campaigns include: Colorado Children's Campaign and Clayton Early Learning, Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, Advocates for Children of New Jersey; Child Care Services Association in partnership with North Carolina Early Education Coalition, and Children's Alliance in Washington.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will work closely with ZERO TO THREE to develop and implement a campaign to advance policies benefiting infants and toddlers. 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.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT encourages everyone to become part of the team that is fighting for our future. Visit thinkbabies.org today to learn more about *Think Babies* and to find out how to take action. Watch the new [Think Babies video](#) and share it on social media to raise the volume on the conversation. Information on *Think Babies* Rhode Island activities can be found at www.rikidscount.org.

Funding partners for *Think Babies* include the Perigee Fund and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which supports the campaign's public education aspects.

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.

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, facebook.com/zerotothree or follow [@zerotothree on Twitter](https://twitter.com/zerotothree).

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