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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NC Early Education Coalition brings families and advocates to Raleigh on April 9th for *Strolling Thunder: A Think Babies™ Advocacy Day* Event is part of a statewide campaign to make every baby a top priority

Raleigh, NC – The North Carolina Early Education Coalition (the Coalition) is bringing babies, parents, teachers, and early childhood advocates to Raleigh for *Strolling Thunder: A Think Babies™ NC Advocacy Day* to call attention to what all babies and families in North Carolina need to thrive. The event takes place on Tuesday, April 9th from 10:00am-1:00pm at Halifax Mall at the North Carolina General Assembly. As a state partner in the national ZERO TO THREE Think Babies™ campaign, the Coalition aims to raise public awareness and speak with policymakers about the importance of making the potential of every baby their top priority.

“We are excited for North Carolina’s legislators to hear from some of their youngest constituents,” said Michele Rivest, Policy Director of the Coalition. “The science is clear: our brains grow faster between the ages of 0 and 3 than at any later point in our lives. Ensuring that babies have healthy beginnings, supported families, and access to high-quality early care and learning experiences during the first months and years of life has an enormous impact on how a child learns and grows throughout his or her lifetime.”

The Think Babies™ NC initiative seeks to advance policies that support the healthy development of North Carolina’s babies and toddlers. The initiative is led by the NC Early Education Coalition with support from a Leadership Team of state and local organizations focused on advancing public awareness and policy solutions for infants, toddlers, and their families.

Strolling Thunder is the flagship advocacy event of the national Think Babies™ campaign to bring attention to the many issues that impact babies and their families. Here in North Carolina, more than half of infants and toddlers live in poverty or low-income households, less than 1% of all babies receive home visiting services, and the infant mortality rate is one of the highest in the country.

“To do better for our children and our state’s future, we need North Carolina’s leaders to focus on our youngest and most valuable resource by investing in things that work,” said Rivest. “Increasing funding for child care assistance would allow more families to work and make sure more children receive high-quality early learning experiences; expanding home visiting programs would provide critical support for families during a time when they are most stressed; and closing the health insurance coverage gap would help ensure healthy births and on-track development for our kids. It’s time to adopt policies built on the science of brain development and support budgets that put babies and families first.”

Along with event co-sponsors MomsRising and the NC Association for the Education of Young Children (NCAEYC), the Coalition has a variety of activities planned for the event, including remarks from state and national leaders, storytime with legislators, children's crafts and activities, meetings with legislators, and more. A limited number of travel stipends are available for parents and early education providers. Registration is now open at <https://strollingthunderadvocacyday.eventbrite.com>. Additional information about Think Babies™ NC can be found at www.nearlyeducationcoalition.org.

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About the North Carolina Early Education Coalition

The North Carolina Early Education Coalition works to ensure that all children have access to high quality early care and learning experiences. Since 1990, the organization has highlighted the proven power of quality early childhood education by sharing information and resources with parents, professionals and policymakers. The NC Early Education Coalition is a proud partner in the national [ZERO TO THREE](#) Think Babies™ campaign and in the [Pritzker Children's Initiative's](#) National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers. For more information, please visit www.nearlyeducationcoalition.org, facebook.com/nearlyedcoalition or follow [@NCEarlyEdCo](#) on Twitter.

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.