

The Belcher Family:

"Know the signs, Be their voice."

Kristine woke up terrified and rushed to check on her then 4 week-old baby boy, Ezekiel. He had been congested and she found him having trouble breathing and turning blue. Kristine and her husband rushed to the emergency room. This episode would mark Ezekiel's life forever.

Soon after, Kristine began noticing Ezekiel would not turn his head when calling out his name anymore and his babbling speech had completely stopped at around 18 months. As an administrator at a local high school, Kristine knew from her colleagues there were many tests and options available to find out if something was developmentally wrong with Ezekiel. But, when she requested any test or screening, doctors dismissed her concerns and told her to wait a bit longer for Ezekiel to catch up on his own. He never did.

Kristine and her husband kept pushing and never took "no" for an answer. Once assessments finally took place, Ezekiel was diagnosed with a speech and language delay, multiple processing disorders and a brain injury stemming from his dramatic episode at 4 weeks-old. For Kristine and her husband, the struggles and challenges continue, as they feverishly advocate to make sure Ezekiel gets the services he needs to thrive in school and life. Sadly, Ezekiel is lucky. Thousands of children enter school with many undetected and untreated special needs.



Policy Issue: Early identification of special needs during the first five years of life is critical because this is the time when a child's brain, body and behavior are most pliable. Undetected developmental problems and mental health needs in young children may cause delays in acquiring speech and language, and serious impediments to school learning. Making sure we have systems in place and working with parents to identify developmental problems as early as possible is vital to our children's overall health.



The Children's Movement

"Its not about being right or left, its about our kids."