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Only the Beginning: From Legislative Victories to Real Progress

Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that legislative victories, while important, are only the beginning of the process to make real progress. The enactment of advance payment legislation in **California** is indeed historic and worth emulating throughout the country. But as advocates there know, legislation alone will not fix the longstanding challenge. Now advocates must turn quickly to implementation, education, and evaluation to ensure the law lives up to and/or exceeds expectations.



Our focus here is on California [A.B. 590](#), a major component of the package of government grants reforms pushed by the California Nonprofit Contracting Coalition led by [CalNonprofits](#), the state association of nonprofits. We'll turn to the [words of the bill's sponsor](#), California Assemblyperson Gregg Hart, to explain its significance. The new law "improves and expands the practice of providing nonprofits with up to 25% in advance payments when they receive State grants and contracts." Further, the measure "also prioritizes advance payments for nonprofits serving

disadvantaged, low-income, and under-resourced communities to ensure all nonprofits have fair and equitable access to State grants and contracts.”

CalNonprofits agrees, explaining to its members that “the passage of AB 590 (Hart) in 2023 paved the way for advanced payments to all nonprofits contracting with the state.” But passage is the beginning, not the end of their advocacy: “[It was a huge win for our sector](#), but we know there is plenty of work to come as we look ahead to the challenges of implementation.”

To ensure that the new statute is properly understood and implemented, CalNonprofits promises to keep members “posted in the weeks ahead as we identify strategies for encouraging state agencies to embrace the new law.” Going further, the state association plans to host a webinar on the topic within the next couple of months to help nonprofits understand the bill and their “role in making these critical advancements a reality.”

Taking one more step, CalNonprofits is asking organizations to share their successes and/or challenges in engaging with state agencies around advance payments. This additional step focuses both backward and forward, as in developing the body of evidence of what hasn’t worked in the past against whether and when improvements are made under the new law.

In short, advocacy is a continuous loop. It begins with identification of a problem, understanding it well enough to develop a solution, and then convincing others to agree to adopt the solution. Next comes implementation of the solution, along with making sure the intended beneficiaries know about the change and how best to utilize it (*i.e.*, education), and finally evaluation of whether the solution worked or was properly implemented. Repeat.