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Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno Highlights Significance of New Jersey's Arts Programs to State Economy in Visit to the Long Beach Island Foundation for the Arts and Sciences

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Non-Profit Arts Center Wins National "Our Town" Planning Grant to Support Community Economic Growth through the Arts

Trenton, NJ – Emphasizing the contributions of the arts in advancing the state and local economies, Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno today visited the Long Beach Island Foundation for the Arts and Sciences, a non-profit arts and education center in Loveladies, Long Beach Township. Today's visit marks the Lt. Governor's first stop on her month-long "Arts Mean Business" tour across New Jersey, with a spotlight on increasing economic development by supporting New Jersey's cultural groups and organizations to create prosperous downtowns and communities.

"We are proud that the Long Beach Island Foundation, which has long been supported by state arts funding, has now been recognized with an "Our Town" grant from the federal government for its efforts to expand economic vitality on LBI through the arts. Time and again, we have seen that New Jersey's cultural offerings attract people to downtowns – filling shops in the daytime, restaurants in the evening, and hotels at night," said Lt. Governor Guadagno. "The arts are an important part of New Jersey's tourism industry, which is the state's fifth-largest private sector employer, and help make LBI a year-round destination."

The "Our Town" grant from the National Endowment for the Arts will help plan a Long Beach Island Cultural District that will showcase activities and programs available on the island while bolstering economic opportunities for businesses.

"In a tourist-based economy such as LBI's, it is essential to ensure that the available arts programs and activities are accessible to both residents and tourists," added Lt. Governor Guadagno. "The Foundation will engage the diverse stakeholders of Long Beach Island – residents, businesspeople, artists, and local officials – so that the plan will benefit the entire island."

The Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts and Sciences (LBIF), established in 1948, will be working on the "Our Town" grant with Arts Build Communities, a partnership between the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and Rutgers University. The Foundation engages and connects visitors and residents through art classes, exhibits and other activities. The "Our Town" planning grant will allow the community to begin the process of revitalizing and connecting island communities through the arts. The primary partners in this effort, the Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts & Sciences and the Township of Long Beach, are joined by the Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce, the LBI Business Alliance, and Surfflight Theater as official partners.

"We are excited by the variety of people who've been eager to participate in this endeavor – artists, business leaders, community visionaries, nonprofit organizations, the other municipalities on Long Beach Island, and the general public," said Lori Pepenella, the Destination Marketing Director at the Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce.

"Identifying underutilized assets that could help support the arts – such as vacant buildings or areas that could be used for public art, performances or events – will increase tourism, provide jobs, and improve the quality of life on and around LBI."

Long Beach Island exerts a strong pull on artists and art lovers, especially in the summer. The planning partnership aims to coordinate and increase the visibility and importance of the arts on Long Beach Island. Because of the unique geography of the island, a unifying, cohesive plan will help bring together the businesses and municipalities on either side of the central causeway. One aim of the project is to create more interaction between people and institutions, as well as more integration of events and cultural activities.

The economic impact of the arts - and New Jersey's cultural community overall - extends throughout the state. The National Governors Association's recent report, "New Engines of Growth: Five Roles for Arts, Culture and Design," states "arts, culture, and design can assist states with economic growth because they can: provide a fast-growth, dynamic industry cluster; help mature industries become more competitive; provide the critical ingredients for innovative places; catalyze community revitalization; and deliver a better-prepared workforce." New Jersey was specifically cited in the report for workforce development, and places like the LBIF help with that important work.

Led by Lt. Governor Guadagno, the New Jersey Partnership for Action (PFA) supports the vital role business plays in advancing the state's economy and creating jobs. The PFA is a three-pronged public-private approach to economic development and the starting point for all initiatives, policies, and efforts to grow New Jersey's economy and create quality, sustainable jobs in our communities. The three elements of the PFA include the Business Action Center, reporting directly to the Lt. Governor and providing the business community with a single point of contact, applying a proactive, customer-service approach to businesses' interactions with State government; the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, serving as the state's "bank for business"; and Choose New Jersey, an independently funded and operated 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation created to encourage and nurture economic growth throughout New Jersey.

Businesses considering a move or in need of assistance are encouraged to call New Jersey's Business Action Center at (866) 534-7789 or visit the State's Business Portal at www.newjerseybusiness.gov.

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