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COMPLETE

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Page 1: Candidate Information

**Q1**

Office You are Seeking

House District 20

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**Q2**

Party

Democrat

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**Q3**

First Name

Becky

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**Q4**

Last Name

Gardner

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**Q5**

Email

vote@beckygardnerhawaii.com

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**Q6**

Phone

808-772-0521

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**Q7**

Campaign Website

<https://www.beckygardnerhawaii.com>

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Page 2: COVID-19 Response and Recovery

**Q8**

What steps do you think our state and/or counties should take to aid this recovery? Some examples could include how you think federal funds should be spent, diversifying the state's economy, etc.

I think our number one priority is to fund and implement a comprehensive testing protocol that includes contact tracing, antibody testing, adequate and appropriate quarantine periods, and a careful examination and monitoring of new arrivals to our state. We need to do this first, so we can stabilize all residents' health and safety. We also need to implement an easy-to-follow set of guidelines the public can embrace and engage - depending on degrees of virus spread. All this will require strong messaging and community buy-in. This will not go smoothly unless we have strong, decisive, and transparent leadership.

To the extent that we can enhance our data and really know what we're dealing with, we can better prioritize our needs and marshal our resources accordingly. This means prioritizing and investing in our public health agencies so they can respond and operate with speed, effectiveness, and efficiency.

We then need to establish policies that best stabilize the economic viability of everyone in Hawaii to make it to the other side of this pandemic - through unemployment benefits, financial assistance, social services, appropriate distribution of federal aid, and more. If it is determined that our General Funds cannot meet these needs, then we should take advantage of the multiple ways we can use our state's high credit rating to borrow at historically low rates, and apply for all the federal aid opportunities that exist, before we even consider resorting to austerity measures.

We need to focus much of our efforts on ensuring and strengthening the safety net for vulnerable populations that have the greatest risk of contracting COVID-19 or potential for loss and suffering from its economic aftermath. We need to ensure that everyone has access to healthcare, can pay their housing costs, feed their families, and can get back on their feet.

We need to look carefully at the circumstances of those on the frontlines of shipping, production, warehousing, delivery, sanitation, utilities, food service, and health care. These are our heroes right now - Hawaii's working class. This crisis has highlighted, with stark clarity, how they are the backbone of our economy - and critical for the smooth functioning of society. There is a reason they are called "essential workers" - and they are risking their own health to ensure the health of the whole. We need to enact legislation that ensures they make a living wage - and that their pay better reflects their value to society. In this vein, we should also start creating a fund to guarantee hazard pay in a future calamity.

We also need to review and revamp our policies and support for childcare. Many jurisdictions are providing childcare or reimbursement for emergency workers; and it seems to be similar initiatives now in Hawaii. For example, Minnesota and Vermont have designated grocery clerks as "emergency personnel" so that they can benefit from the same programs. This is especially important here in Hawaii, where 90% of our food and fuel arrives here on ships and is stocked by essential workers at grocery stores and warehouse retailers like Costco and Sam's Club.

The record number of unemployment claims has shown the limitations of our current system. We need to look carefully at this system, our funding and management of it, and most importantly, our technological infrastructure that administers it.

Given the present circumstances - we need to develop our healthcare law and policy; which thankfully, has been grounded in Hawaii's Prepaid Health Care Act, to ensure that all residents have a fair shot at maintaining physical and mental health, and receive all the care they need to thrive. We can no longer allow any of our residents to be vulnerable to a pandemic like COVID-19 simply because they cannot afford adequate health insurance. Until we have a national policy that recognizes that healthcare is a human right, I am more committed than ever to advancing law and policy that will protect the health and safety, and by logical extension, the economic viability of Hawaii's residents.

The state also needs to be very careful with its economic policies and not revert to austerity measures that would further cripple the economy. We should take full advantage of the federal relief and low-rate loans and bonds that are available. We should engage in a comprehensive analysis of the type of spending that may be moot under current circumstances; make appropriate cuts; explore a range of ways to recapture tax revenue that is lost to breaks and credits provided to corporations and Hawaii's highest earners; raise taxes on

the entities that strip Hawaii of its wealth while failing to invest their earnings back into Hawaii, like REITs and other investor-owned property; and with these changes, channel resources to programs that directly prioritize the well-being of Hawaii's families.

I am intrigued and inspired by the recommendations for post-COVID economic recovery in the recent policy briefs from the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women; UHERO (University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization); the Public Policy Center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa; the Hawaii Working Families Coalition; and others.

As a legislator, I will listen very carefully, and open my mind to the hard work, committed problem-solving; and dogged research of experts and advocacy groups whom I trust to have the best interest of Hawaii's residents at heart. With all the hardship and challenges presented by the pandemic, it is revealing to us just how much aloha abounds in this state. With the ethic of community and cooperation, we can rebuild a stronger, more resilient Hawaii. And I would consider it an honor and privilege to be a part of that process.

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**Q9**

Please share some of the efforts you have led or participated in response to COVID-19.

What may be relevant is the work I've been doing to help the community-at-large to help address the impact the pandemic. The project I'm most proud of is volunteering with a legal team to help handle the legal matters to help enable the FDA authorization of of an open-source bridge ventilator by a group of local engineers and doctors – Kahanu. Their work is cutting edge and world-class, and I found it extremely gratifying to contribute my legal skills and professional experience working with federal regulatory agencies to help this group navigate the legal requirements for their application for FDA Emergency Authorization. (See acknowledgment from Kahanu here: <https://kahanu.org/mahalo/> )

I have also been engaged in some mask-making and distribution projects, and bringing campaign volunteers with me. One project was with the Department of Health and Faith Action Community Equity (FACE) to make face shields for our healthcare worker frontline. Another project was a mask-give-away at Kaimuki Christian Church in conjunction with Honolulu Councilmember Tommy Waters, Envision Kaimuki (a neighborhood improvement non-profit, to which I'm a founding members and officer), and Kaimuki Christian Church. These events were great fun as it gave my volunteers and I an opportunity to engage in rare social interactions while simultaneously helping our community cope with the pandemic.

Mask-making seems to be a theme of my campaign, and I am looking into helping out with the Medicare for All Hawaii's upcoming mask-making project – whose overarching effort to ensure universal health care I fully support.

I also used my past experience volunteering to set up non-profits to help a new organization establish itself as a Hawaii non-profit and begin distributing meals to disadvantaged and needy families, particularly the elderly. I've been in the process of drafting their articles of incorporation, bylaws, and 501c3 application.

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**Q10**

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

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**Q11**

What policies do you think the state and/or counties should enact to reduce tobacco and e-cigarette use?

I'm very concerned about the vaping epidemic and teen addiction. Smoking has never been so dangerous. In light of the additional risks posed to our respiratory systems from COVID, I am more motivated to support all sorts of tobacco use prevention and cessation, and nicotine addiction programs – particularly in our schools for our youth.

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**Q12**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Apply a tobacco tax to e-cigarettes, such as a percentage of the wholesale cost or taxing e-liquid by volume. | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
| Prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes and flavored e-liquids.      | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
| Restrict online sales of e-cigarettes to tobacco retailers only, in order to curb illegal sales to minors.    | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
| Increase the tobacco tax on cigarettes to help smokers quit and prevent new users from starting.              | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
| Funds from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes should fund tobacco prevention and cessation efforts.     | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
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**Q13**

Additional thoughts/comments:

The higher the tax on tobacco and e-cigarettes, the better. Our bodies are otherwise paying the tax; which our health care systems then also bear.

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**Q14**

What steps do you think the state and/or counties should take to ensure food security for all of Hawaii's people, and to significantly increase food self-sufficiency for our state?

We can improve Hawaii's food security and sustainability by focusing on our rich agricultural potential through diverse produce cultivation, permaculture efforts, and innovative non-toxic technologies for propagation, growth, and harvest.

For example, I am eager to support the initiatives in Hawaii that seek to increase the production and propagation of Ulu (breadfruit) and its products - using green, sustainable, locally-sourced energy to sustain this work, as well as other agricultural industries.

Food security also complements our local economy. We have so many great reasons to innovate here – with our natural resources and community commitment. We can bask on a wide range of technological innovations, intellectual property, software-development, scientific research, creative and knowledge-work in ways that do not strip our environment or undermine the economic viability of our working and middle class.

I think that there is much government can do to support the development of these innovations and support food self-sufficiency by incentivizing use and purchase of local products; subsidizing training and education through scholarships and work corps; and fortifying our research institutions.

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**Q15**

In 2019, Hawai'i made a commitment to adopt Vision Zero, an initiative to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. What policies and infrastructure changes should the state and/or counties make to achieve this goal?

Just 2 weeks ago I witnessed a horrible pedestrian accident on Waialae after sign-waving. We should look at innovative cross walk alternatives, like raised crosswalks we see proliferating on the west side of the island; bulb-outs as recently featured in a civil beat article, and rainbow-painted crosswalks we see cropping up across the nation, like in Maplewood, New Jersey – see in this article: <https://www.advocate.com/pride/2018/6/09/new-jersey-town-unveils-first-permanent-rainbow-flag-crosswalk-state>

Our communities need to be safer and more accommodating to pedestrians. It is better for our health and environment.

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**Q16**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

We must significantly increase public investment in food systems workforce development, including programs such as farm to school, agriculture and food systems education (PreK-12 and higher education), and farmer training programs. **Strongly Support**

The state should continue to invest in a Double Up Food Bucks program, which doubles the value of SNAP benefits when buying fresh, locally grown produce at participating retailers. **Strongly Support**

Enact a one-cent per-ounce fee on sugar-sweetened beverages. **Strongly Support**

Use revenue from a sugar-sweetened beverage fee for obesity prevention programs. **Strongly Support**

Make health and physical education (PE) courses a curriculum requirement, rather than an option, for middle school students. PE is currently a requirement for elementary and high school students. **Strongly Support**

Implement a red light camera program to deter red-light running and help curb traffic fatalities and injuries. **Strongly Support**

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**Q17**

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 5: Oral Health

**Q18**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

Reinstate coverage of preventative dental benefits for Adult Medicaid participants. **Strongly Support**

Fluoridation of community water supplies is an effective way to prevent tooth decay. **Strongly Support**

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**Q19**

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 6: Alcohol Regulations

**Q20**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

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|---|-------------------------|
| Increase in alcohol taxes.  | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
| Repeal of the alcohol takeout laws that allow people to buy and take home liquor-based mixed drinks from restaurants.                       | <b>Support</b>          |
| Repeal of alcohol delivery laws that allow restaurants to deliver beer and liquor-based mixed drinks to people's homes.                     | <b>Support</b>          |
| Increase in enforcement that helps ensure that youth do not access alcohol through existing laws allowing for alcohol takeout and delivery. | <b>Support</b>          |
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**Q21**

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 7: Marijuana Regulations

**Q22**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Do you support legalizing recreational marijuana sales in Hawai'i?  | <b>Support</b>          |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that marijuana be regulated by the Department of Health?              | <b>Support</b>          |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the price of marijuana be regulated?                             | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the promotion and advertisement of marijuana sales be regulated? | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that marijuana potency be regulated?                                  | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the number and placement of marijuana outlets be regulated?      | <b>Strongly Support</b> |
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**Q23**

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 8: Economic Justice

**Q24**

What are your immediate plans to help make Hawai'i more affordable for its residents?

Clearly, Hawaii's economy is not working out for most of us. There are lots of things we can do to address this, but I think our first focus should be on raising the minimum wage so it truly is a "living" wage that accounts for Hawaii's costly housing market.

I would also look at all the ways we could achieve tax fairness. Recent studies indicate that our lowest-income households pay over 13% of their income in state and local taxes, while those at the top pay less than 8%. As a legislator, I would advance policies to correct tax imbalances that have been created over decades by reducing or eliminating tax liability for those living in poverty; and recapture some of the taxes that wealthy estates and high-wage-earners have advocated to avoid. We need to restructure our tax system so it more progressive - fairly taxing those entities that have created the most imbalance to our economy, and have harmed the quality of life across our communities.

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## Q25

What is the role of government in addressing housing affordability issues and what would you do to encourage the production of more affordable homes for Hawai'i residents?

Our next focus should be on shelter, which is an essential, foundational need. We learned this from initiatives like "housing first;" yet, affordable housing is increasingly out of reach for too many of us in Hawaii – including myself as a parent and head of my household. Hawaii has the unfortunate distinction of having one of the highest housing costs in the nation, driving our long-term residents to the mainland and leaving a vacuum to be filled by wealthy investors who lack commitment to our communities. This is not good for our state; nor is it sustainable.

As a legislator I would support efforts that maximize affordable housing opportunities that fit within the development plan of each community, under the current legal and regulatory scheme. For example, in my district – District 20, which includes Kaimuki, Palolo, and St. Louis Heights, I believe that the Wai'alae corridor, which is very close to the university, is a suitable location to increase density with mixed-use, mid-level housing with retail on the ground floor. This would resemble the kind of higher-density, but safe, close-knit communities we see in Europe. I see development along this route as important for providing housing options for students, as well as young professionals and families who need access to public transportation. I think this type of development is also consistent with the character of my community – and is something I have explored as one of the founding members of Envision Kaimuki.

As a legislator, I will introduce and champion bills that further support and increase funding for infrastructure and financing programs for the development of low-income units for local residents at or near cost – particularly on state land where there exists great opportunities to build at subsidized rates. I'd also like to expand and support existing subsidies like the Rental Housing Revolving Fund, which has been successful in providing units for Hawaii's most vulnerable.

In this vein, I am encouraged by the legislature's focus and attention to the ALOHA homes proposal being advanced by Senator Stanley Chang. I think that vertical development on government land in high-density areas - near jobsites, public transportation, educational institutions, parks and malls - holds great promise. I support the availability of leasehold arrangements for residents with a range of incomes in such developments.

I also want to explore various policy initiatives across the country for implementation here in Hawaii. For example, Minneapolis, Oregon and California are now leading the way in housing policy by changing zoning laws to allow for increased density within the existing urban growth boundary.

However, I understand that cookie-cutter plans aren't always effective, so I will advocate for zoning changes that reflect Hawaii's cultural make-up, eliminate exclusionary zoning, and allow for multi-family units in currently single-family zoned areas; as well as multi-story units in areas near high-capacity transit.

I am interested and encouraged by affordable housing initiatives that incorporate Hawaii's history and values, like the plantation-inspired Kahauiki Village project by Keehi lagoon – and would like to help replicate the successes achieved there.

I also think there is more we can do to support the growth and use of accessory dwelling units, tiny homes, and communal living arrangements.

Changes are needed to enable a healthy, strong, and affordable housing market that meet all our residents' needs, and I am eager to help usher those changes in.

**Q26**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

Increase the state's minimum wage in a series of annual steps to a living wage of \$17 per hour. **Strongly Support**

Create a statewide Paid Family Leave Program, which would allow up to 12 weeks for employees to provide care for a newborn, bond with a new child, or care for a family member with a serious health condition. **Strongly Support**

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**Q27**

**Respondent skipped this question**

Additional thoughts/comments:

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