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Page 1: Candidate Information

Q1

Office You are Seeking

State House - District 45

Q2

Party

Democratic Party

Q3

First Name

Michael

Q4

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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.

Our overall goal should be to create economic stimulus from the bottom-up. Our economy will not recover if we neglect working people and those who were laid off or had their hours reduced. Our economy will not recover if our people spend their paychecks on bills and debt payments. We need to do everything we can to help those with the greatest need. That includes not only financial support and progressive tax policy, but also a greater allocation of resources toward services such as unemployment insurance, healthcare, education, and childcare.

In terms of diversifying the economy, three promising industries are film, technology (including cyber fields and green technology), and agriculture. Each of these sectors involve opportunities to create good jobs and bring money into the state. For example, each film that comes to our state provides work ranging across dozens of professions – from actors and camera operators to hairdressers, truck drivers, accountants, and security professionals. We should look to maximize the gains realized from these industries by building up our workforce, attracting revenues, and keeping those revenues circulating within the state. I believe that the winning formula for recovery is comprised of economic diversification, smart tax policy, and strong social services, all aimed at creating trickle-up economic growth.

Q9

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

In addition to various volunteer opportunities, I have used my skills in government and public policy to help my neighbors navigate the COVID-19 response, which has at times been very confusing. I have leveraged social media and other platforms to keep my neighbors up-to-date on the various stay-at-home orders and other regulations, as well as local concerns.

For example, after the first stay-at-home order was issued, many people were unsure which businesses were still operating. This meant not only that prepared food was difficult to find, but also that local businesses were struggling to keep their doors open. I contacted every restaurant in the district in order to see if they were still operating and created a public directory of these businesses, which I posted online and in local Facebook groups for public use. I also notified community members about farmers' market locations and hours, as well as direct-to-consumer and virtual farmers' market services.

Q10

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

Page 3: Tobacco and E-Cigarette Regulations

Q11

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

Education and public outreach should be the main priorities. We need to communicate the harms of these products specifically to our youth, but also to their parents. It is important to ensure that youth vaping regulations are enforced. In order to reduce the number of e-cigarettes that get into minors' hands, we should consider prohibiting the sale of e-cigarettes within a certain radius of schools. We should also tax these products and use those revenues for prevention efforts.

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. | Strongly Support |
| Prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes and flavored e-liquids. | Oppose |
| Restrict online sales of e-cigarettes to tobacco retailers only, in order to curb illegal sales to minors. | Strongly Support |
| Increase the tobacco tax on cigarettes to help smokers quit and prevent new users from starting. | Support |
| Funds from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes should fund tobacco prevention and cessation efforts. | Strongly Support |
-

Q13

Additional thoughts/comments:

We need to address the youth vaping issue. However, if an adult chooses to consume a flavored product, with knowledge of its health risks, I do not believe that it is the government's job to prevent that individual from doing so. I recognize that the intention is to keep the product away from children, but I believe that focusing in on predatory marketing and illegal sales would be a much fairer and more effective solution.

Page 4: Healthy Eating + Active Living

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?

First, we should source state and county facilities, such as hospitals, schools, and correctional facilities, with local produce. This will give our agricultural producers a steady revenue baseline that can serve as a fallback if other industries, such as tourism, recede.

Next, we should help our local businesses to scale up their operations. Our agriculture industry should include not only farming, but also value-added production, agritourism, and export products. The State should look to connect business owners with opportunities to expand the scope of their businesses so that we can fully leverage the industry.

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?

We need to make our communities more walkable and bikeable. Depending on the area, this might include protected bike paths and walkways, illuminated crosswalks, and pedestrian bridges. Other safety measures can include mirrors around dangerous turns and red light cameras at busy intersections.

Traffic safety largely comes from reducing traffic. I rarely hear this relationship talked about. Congestion increases the risk of auto collisions drastically by leading to more frequent lane changes, speed differences, and more erratic driving. Collisions are relatively rare when traffic is free-flowing. Therefore, alleviating traffic should be at the top of the list when it comes to traffic safety. We can reduce traffic by incentivizing staggered work schedules, carpooling, the use of public transportation, and telework. We can also make more efficient roadways, create 'smart intersections' by coordinating streetlights, utilize a westbound zipper lane, and target severe traffic 'chokepoints.'

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 Oppose**

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

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. **Support**

Q17

Additional thoughts/comments:

Regarding the 'soda tax' – I do not believe that it is the government's job to regulate individuals' health decisions. I support behavioral taxes when they are used to mitigate negative externalities (for example, social harms like pollution or secondhand smoke). However, I believe that the government should focus mainly on providing the information needed to inform individuals about health decisions, rather than trying to manually or forcefully adjust their health decisions for them.

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**

Q19

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

Page 6: Alcohol Regulations

Q20

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

Increase in alcohol taxes. **Oppose**

Repeal of the alcohol takeout laws that allow people to buy and take home liquor-based mixed drinks from restaurants. **Strongly Oppose**

Repeal of alcohol delivery laws that allow restaurants to deliver beer and liquor-based mixed drinks to people's homes. **Strongly Oppose**

Increase in enforcement that helps ensure that youth do not access alcohol through existing laws allowing for alcohol takeout and delivery. **Oppose**

Q21

Additional thoughts/comments:

We should be supporting our local breweries, restaurants, and distilleries, not burdening them further. So long as businesses follow the proper protocols – such as verifying a purchaser's age – I do not see a problem with delivery. Anyone who is eligible to purchase alcohol by delivery could just as easily go to the store and purchase alcohol. In fact, delivery may be even safer than consuming alcohol while away from home, since there are no transportation concerns in this situation.

Regarding the final question – I am not sure what enforcement could be reasonably increased, beyond what is currently required of alcohol sales. However, if there is a way to keep alcohol out of the hands of youth, then of course I will support it.

Page 7: Marijuana Regulations

Q22

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

Do you support legalizing recreational marijuana sales in Hawai'i? **Support**

If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that marijuana be regulated by the Department of Health? **Support**

If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the price of marijuana be regulated? **Strongly Oppose**

If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the promotion and advertisement of marijuana sales be regulated? **Strongly Support**

If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that marijuana potency be regulated? **Support**

If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the number and placement of marijuana outlets be regulated? **Support**

Q23

Additional thoughts/comments:

Taxes can be used as a price lever, but there is no need to directly regulate the price.

Page 8: Economic Justice

Q24

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

One immediate action that we should take is to exempt necessities like groceries, medicine, and hygiene products from the general excise tax. Hawai'i has the fifth-highest 'grocery tax' in the nation, and is one of a small group of states that taxes groceries in any capacity. We could instantly save our residents four to five percent on their grocery bills, which would make a big difference for people living paycheck to paycheck.

Through my work at the Hawai'i Public Utilities Commission, I have learned about how we can leverage renewable energy to reduce our residents' utility bills. We have reached a tipping point where many forms of renewable energy generation are cheaper than fossil fuels. If we leverage smart rate design, electric vehicles, grid-interactivity, and other tools, we can drive down our residents' and businesses' monthly bills.

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?

We need to expand our affordable housing supply and do so using a reasonable definition of "affordable." Our people are tired of seeing "affordable housing projects" filled with individuals and investors that make well above the area median income. I believe that we should also rehabilitate abandoned or dilapidated properties in residential areas and convert them into multi-unit affordable housing projects. This would improve our communities and providing much-needed housing, without cutting into natural or agricultural lands. The bulk of our housing supply expansion should occur through high-density housing in the urban core. Addressing illegal vacation rentals and vacant properties will help to free up additional housing inventory.

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. **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**

Q27

Additional thoughts/comments:

I support a minimum wage of \$15 an hour, tied to inflation. I appreciate the intent of the proposal to increase the minimum wage to \$17 an hour. However, I fear that a jump from \$10.10 an hour to \$17.00 an hour would destroy many small businesses and damage our economy.

One job should be enough. I think the way we get there is by increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and proactively addressing many factors that contribute to the cost of living – such as food, housing, transportation, utilities, and healthcare – while creating a strong social safety net. If costs keep running away, then even \$17 an hour will soon be insufficient to survive. We should address the more structural problems with our economy.
