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Page 1: Candidate Information

Q1

Office You are Seeking

Maui County Councilmember

Q2

Respondent skipped this question

Party

Q3

First Name

Aja

Q4

Last Name

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Q7

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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.

This crisis is actually a unique opportunity to set many of our wayward paths right in this county. Mostly, I hope this has awoken our county to the reality that our local government has a huge role in our everyday lives and livelihoods, and we cannot expect the same players to make different decisions than they have in the past, so if we want to move forward, we need to vote forward.

The county has the opportunity to remake itself into a small business and small agriculture supportive county, and that means we need to address the high cost of doing business here. We need to address the outrageous lease prices for commercial space, and that should be done through rent control on commercial and agricultural land and buildings. We also need to close the loophole that allows large corporations to claim huge tax write-offs because of their high-lease vacant buildings. In addition, we should consider a vacancy tax on commercial and agricultural property to encourage more inventory and lower rents.

As our county budget will not vary much in pandemic times because our revenue comes mostly from county taxes, I see room to redirect our funds to boost some of our underdeveloped industries, specifically health care, education, and agriculture. We are already doing this through post-Covid loans and microloans offered through the OED to small businesses. We also can open up or streamline some of our overly stringent regulations in these industries to allow for more development. I would love to see Maui ten to twenty years in the future with a robust healthcare education system, especially for skilled nursing, healthcare technicians, and mental healthcare. I would also like us to set on a path to have more career training options available and build a stronger internship and apprenticeship network across the industries. The county can facilitate this by building stronger information dissemination in its OED and in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, and in working with the public schools to build stronger career training centers.

Q9

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

My Covid-19 experience was probably similar to most parents out there: my world was turned upside down as the mother of five children who very suddenly were home from school and all activities and needed to be comforted, educated, entertained, and nurtured with almost no assistance from the outside world. I had to find new ways to keep up with my work and career while also helping my immediate family, extended family, and neighbors overcome their new harsh realities. It was an especially trying time as my daughter saw her senior spring disappear and the graduation she had looked forward to her whole life melt away. At the same time, I had to manage a huge decrease in my husband's income, the huge amounts of homework my highschoolers had to manage, and a kindergartener who could not understand why school suddenly stopped. I felt like the eye of the hurricane trying to remain calm and safe while the world around me blew in rage. This was and is my primary effort in response to Covid-19.

Beyond my own family, my efforts went first and foremost to assisting the youth programs and schools I already volunteer with. For example, I helped my daughter's school with their drive-through graduation, and I have worked relentlessly to try and get our youth sports programs up and running as soon as it was safe to do so. I've been consulted for curriculum changes and new schooling approaches. I've also worked to bridge the communication lines between the Department of Health and the County Departments that affect openings and closures of county parks, pools, and education resources.

With the pandemic, I've also led some watchdog efforts to make sure environmental laws and regulations are not ignored while eyes are distracted elsewhere, especially as it pertains to county and commercial construction. This work is ongoing.

Q10

Additional thoughts/comments:

If you want your home, your county, to come out of this year's crises more resilient and empowered, then I encourage you to be an informed voter, and to devote your attention to our local government. If anything, we have learned this year that local government is what really matters, and it is what makes a difference in our everyday lives. Don't just vote because you know the name or because you've seen a banner, and don't just allow the same people in office to do the same ineffective things they have been doing for years. Now is the time to make sure our county is in the best hands and that our leadership is smart, capable, and ready to move Maui forward. I believe that I will be that leader. If you would like more information about my specific ideas of how I can do this, please visit AJAEYRE.COM.

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?

When I have worked in our high schools, I have been shocked at the prevalent use of e-cigarettes. I have been especially shocked at the lack of information the youth have about the ill-effects of e-cigarettes and the proven health concerns. The state and county, along with our well-informed and hard-working non-profits need to get in the schools early and educate these youth.

We also need to apply taxes to e-cigarettes, prohibit minor-enticing flavors on all tobacco products, restrict online sales, and use our tobacco-generated taxes to fund the cessation and education programs.

I have been especially concerned about the increase of e-cigarette use in school during school time, and I think we need to talk very seriously about involving the youth in our programs as leaders. We need to delegate the ownership and leadership of our cessation programs to the youth themselves and let them be a stronger part of the solution.

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. | Strongly Support |
| 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. | Strongly Support |
| Funds from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes should fund tobacco prevention and cessation efforts. | Strongly Support |
-

Q13

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

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?

We need to become more agricultural overall. As a small farmer for almost two decades, I see very egregious ways in which our county does nothing to support family-based food security. For example, we have no rent-control on agricultural lands and continue to allow fertile ag land to be developed into so called "gentlemen's estates". We need to place stricter controls on agricultural land, but we also need to make allowance for those on ag land who are providing solely for their own family and do not file a Schedule F to show agricultural profit. We need to deregulate agricultural products and production, while more fully regulating pesticide and fertilizer use, as right now we do the opposite. There are so many small details in our poor attempt at supporting food security from an agricultural standpoint, and we perhaps need a County Department of Agriculture just to clean up the mess.

And, we need to get our water into the hands of our farmers. We have a total disaster when it comes to water and irrigation. Not only do many families not have access to county water meters, but our farmers are not and have never been assured that their irrigation water will continue year after year. Farmers in East Maui have had their water diverted for generations, and farmers who rely on East Maui Irrigation have never been assured that they will get water in perpetuity. We need to wrest water rights out of private corporate hands and look to forming empowered co-ops to share water to our local farmers. Off-shore companies should not be controlling local water.

We also need to boost our educational offerings as a county to put food security back into our families' capabilities. From working with and encouraging our hard-working non-profits who educate our keiki and local families to providing county assets to agricultural based programs, we can and should do better.

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?

The county and state has been directing more funds to road and traffic construction projects over the last four years, and predict to be able continue to do so, especially with the increase in non-restricted federal funds for capital road improvements. But we need to make sure our shovel-ready jobs are actually meeting the traffic safety and alleviation needs that are supported by the communities. We also need to put bills in place that ensure that we are only building roads and allowing development that support walkable and bikeable communities, as this is something that Maui County especially has failed at over the last few decades. We need to make our public transportation more reliable and user-friendly, by providing more routes, more stops, park-and-ride locations, and safe and covered bus parking. We need to desperately decrease the traffic on our roads, especially the visitor traffic if we return to pre-Covid annual visitor numbers. MPO has been working to find ways to limit the number of visitor vehicles on the road, including having hotel on-site rental cars, and we need to encourage and support regulations that make it easier and cheaper for visitors to use public or shared transportation.

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

Q17

Additional thoughts/comments:

I do not support mandated PE courses for middle schoolers, but instead support a PE waiver that is given for attendance in after-school sports activities. Physical exercise in middle school for, at best, 45 minutes, three days a week will do relatively little to curb adolescent obesity. We should be encouraging even more exercise, and the ages 11-13 are prime time to get our youth into a habit of fully developing athletic talents and learning to love physical activity. PE is also a somewhat emotional experience for many if not most middle schoolers as they tromp through puberty, and the stories of bullying and trauma in middle school PE are egregious enough that I feel a PE waiver is long overdue. Plus, if there is anything that we can do as a community to boost our recreational opportunities and organized sports, I think we should do it! Organized sports are one of the top ways to alleviate the long-term effects of income and education disparity, and our county does not have a history of supporting recreational opportunities for our youth. So, something like a PE waiver that increases awareness of and the market for habit-forming, organized athletic opportunities for our teenagers could positively impact many facets of life in Maui County.

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

Q21

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

Page 7: Marijuana Regulations

Q22

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Do you support legalizing recreational marijuana sales in Hawai'i? | Oppose |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that marijuana be regulated by the Department of Health? | Strongly Support |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the price of marijuana be regulated? | Strongly Support |
| 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? | Strongly 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? | Strongly Support |
-

Q23

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

Page 8: Economic Justice

Q24

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

In Maui, we had one of the highest tourist rates per capita in the entire world prior to the pandemic. Our environment and our quality of life were suffering from the overextension of our natural resources to support tourism, while most tourist dollars left the island. We need to diversify our economy and rebuild tourism sustainably.

To diversify, our county can increase support of small businesses through policies that decrease the costs of operating, such legislation that ensures affordable commercial, retail, and agricultural space, streamlining permits and licensing procedures, and decreasing taxes on small businesses.

As for tourism specifically, we need to make sure tourists feel safe when they do return, and that residents feel safe about tourists. The county should send a clear message about what reopening will look like and how the businesses can develop specific safety protocols. Additionally, we need to address how our reopening will prioritize mitigating tourism and increasing per-visitor spending. We should increase direct taxes on tourists, and use them to lessen their environmental impact and improve residents' quality of life. Working with the community and small businesses, we can direct more tourist dollars to local businesses.

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?

First, we need to get more creative and less slothful as it pertains to affordable housing. I think we also need to change our mindset to addressing affordable rentals before we address affordable purchasable housing, because my research suggests that affordable rentals is the foundational step to the other. Besides many of the initiatives just recently passed and those just getting going, affordable rentals could be increased by looking at our "empty center" commercial areas and considering rezoning vacant and derelict commercial areas for affordable rentals and workforce housing. We could also do more to allow our resident property owners to remodel and restructure their properties to be able to provide more legal and affordable rentals, with the profits directly benefiting our residents. I'm also interested in a vacancy tax, which would encourage offshore property owners to rent their empty homes out, driving up the inventory of rentals and decreasing the cost. I also support the recent completion of senior housing and homeless resource centers in our county, and expect these will help out tremendously.

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**

Q27

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:
