

ACLU of Hawai'i Candidate Questionnaire
Mayor, County of Hawai'i

Candidate Information

Name: Ikaika Marzo

Questions

1. Do you agree that some people should be released from Hawaii's jails and prisons in order to alleviate overcrowding and prevent the continued spread of COVID-19 in our correctional facilities and throughout the community?

YES

This virus doesn't care if you live on O'ahu or Hawai'i Island, it attacks people the same. We know that when people are crowded together, the virus spreads FAST, which is why the situation at HCCC is so concerning to me. On top of the overcrowding, HCCC is not testing inmates enough. As of 9/28, according to the DPS' own data, they have only performed 58 tests (including those work pending results) since the pandemic began. This is despite the fact that, according to DPS' most recent headcount, they are still the most overcrowded jail in the state, with 268 inmates, and several days ago received their first positive test. This is irresponsible and ignoring the problem. This is putting not only inmates at risk, but also the guards, staff, and their ohanas, and the entire Hawai'i Island Community. If we continue ignoring this, it's very likely we're going to see cases explode and overwhelm our hospitals. DPS and DOH must test, test, test, so that we truly know where our cases stand.

Additionally, the irresponsible fear mongering by attorneys and others that conflates nonviolent offenders with dangerous criminals must end. I encourage anyone who is concerned about the releases to read the supreme court order, which specifically excludes those who are serving sentences for violent or bodily crimes, burglaries, and temporary restraining order violations.

2. Do you believe that systemic racism exists in Hawai'i ?

YES

According to the [Office of Hawaiian Affairs](#), Native Hawaiians make up 37% of the prison population, but only 18% of the total population. These statistics alone is enough to tell us there is something seriously unjust about the criminal justice system in Hawaii, from who police decide to arrest, to who prosecutors decide to charge, and with what crimes. This isn't just racist, it's also financially foolish. It costs us more in tax dollars to house a person in jail for a year than the average yearly salary in Hawaii. And on top of that, we lose the income tax that person would be paying, and if they have a family, they are more likely to need public assistance. We've also seen how Micronesians have been disproportionately arrested and jailed for COVID-related crimes.

3. Do you support reducing the budget of the Hawai'i County Police Department and reinvesting the money in community-based supports and services, such as mental health

care, housing, and substance use treatment, which may reduce the need for police intervention?

NO

Mental health care, housing and substance abuse treatments must be funded in addition to keeping our Police Department staffed. Since the Hawaii Island population is rapidly increasing we need police departments responding to ensure our keiki, kūpuna and all on Hawaii Island are protected. We all need to work together. I would like our organizations working to end homelessness address where we can and should develop mental health and substance abuse programs and affordable housing.

4. Do you support amending the Hawai‘i County Charter to grant greater authority to the Hawai‘i County Police Commission in changing the Hawai‘i Police Department’s policies and determining whether/how individual officers are disciplined for misconduct?

YES

I support increased public oversight and accountability for misconduct. We entrust the police with upholding laws that serve the people of our island, and if we expect our people to have trust in this, then, like other public servants, there should be full accountability to the people they serve.

5. Best practices issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advise against taking enforcement actions against houseless individuals and encampments during the COVID-19 pandemic, warning that doing so increases the risk of community spread and may break connections between outreach workers and houseless clients. Will you comply with CDC guidance by ending the use of “sweeps” against houseless individuals and encampments during the COVID-19 pandemic?

YES

I was blown away by how heartless and irrational the government could be when our county conducted a sweep on a houseless camp this spring. Our service providers, the people who know best, had advised the county against it, but still, they showed up with a bullhorn at 6 am and forced people to leave their home in a pandemic. Our nonprofits had been working with people in the camp, giving them food, sanitizer, and medical treatment, and education about COVID-19. This was keeping everyone safe, because there was less need for them to go into the community. When our county swept this site, people were forced to go out into the community, and this put everyone at risk. It broke connections and trust service providers had made, and made it harder to help them get into housing. I absolutely oppose houseless sweeps.

144 words

6. Will you permanently end the use of “sweeps” against houseless individuals and encampments, and reinvest the savings in community services such as mental health outreach and housing?

YES

Sweeps don't work, but social services and affordable housing do and since 38% of our houseless population are children, supporting solutions in this arena is an utmost priority of mine. When a government conducts sweeps, it doesn't end the problem of homelessness, it makes it worse, by breaking connections with service providers who are helping people work toward getting into housing. On top of that, it reinforces the myth that people are houseless because they want to be, and sends the message to the community that houseless people don't deserve respect, and that ending homelessness is someone else's problem. When I was visiting houseless people in downtown Hilo, I was so surprised to run into my cousin, who is a single mom, and was experiencing homelessness. Losing your home can happen to anybody, but even if it couldn't the people struggling to overcome this challenge deserve our respect and assistance.

7. The Portland, Oregon City Council unanimously passed a ban on government and corporate use of facial recognition technology. Do you support a similar ban for Hawai'i County?

YES

We cannot implement technology when we know it's not accurate. An [MIT study](#) found that the technology was extremely inaccurate at identifying dark-skinned people, and in some tests had errors more than one third of the time! Would you support the police purchasing a radar gun that misidentified vehicle speed more than one-third of the time? Especially if it mistook the speed of dark-skinned motorists more often than light-skinned ones? We already know there's racism in the criminal justice system, and this technology has the potential to make it even worse.