

ACLU of Hawai'i Candidate Questionnaire
Mayor, City & County of Honolulu

Instructions

You are receiving this questionnaire because you are a candidate for Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu in the 2020 general election. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on candidates' positions on important civil rights and civil liberties issues that affect the lives of O'ahu residents. The intent of this questionnaire is for the sole purpose of producing and disseminating informational or educational communications and is not intended to influence the outcome of an election, question, or issue on a ballot. This questionnaire was sent to every candidate running for Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu in the 2020 general election. By responding to this questionnaire, you give permission for your responses to be made available to the public. Responses will be published on ACLU of Hawaii's website, acluhi.org, sometime after September 28, 2020. Your responses will be published exactly as you write them and while formatting of the questionnaire may change when published to the website or posted on social media, the substance of both the questions and your responses will not be altered in any way except with regard to the word limit, explained below. Candidates will *not* have the opportunity to make changes to their responses once submitted.

Candidates must provide a response to each question by selecting YES or NO. Candidates then have the option to elaborate on their position in the text box below each question, with a limit of **150 words** per response. If any response is longer than 150 words, we will only publish the first 150 words of the response. The questionnaire will close at 11:59 p.m. on September 28, 2020. No responses will be recorded after September 28. In publishing the results of this questionnaire, the ACLU of Hawai'i will note if a candidate did not respond to the questionnaire.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. We do not support or oppose candidates for elected office. The mission of the ACLU of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and state constitutions.

Candidate Information

Name: Keith Amemiya

Questions

1. The O'ahu Community Correctional Center is now the largest single cluster of COVID-19 cases in the state. 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

NO

Type response here. Max 150 words.

It is appropriate to reduce overcrowding and prevent the spread of COVID-19 by only releasing those that do not pose a safety risk to the community. The O'ahu Community Correctional Center largely houses pre-trial detainees and those participating in reintegration programming. Pre-trial detainees are those that have yet to be convicted of the crimes for which they have been accused, and the primary reason many are in custody is because they cannot afford bail. No one should be in custody simply because they are poor. Ultimately, pre-trial detention should occur only when an individual poses a danger to the community or a flight risk. State and City agencies should be coordinating and ready to support those being released through housing, when not available, social services, and employment programs.

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

YES

NO

Type response here. Max 150 words.

The murder of George Floyd was horrifying. It was not just the result of one horrendous act by one horrendous actor; rather, what we witnessed was the result of layers upon layers of structural inequality, injustice, and systemic racism. These structural problems exist here in our islands as well, too often unaddressed because they are uncomfortable, complicated, and politically inconvenient. Systemic racism is not merely a problem within our criminal justice system, for its roots exist in a long history that has denied vulnerable communities the rights they deserve. Together we can dismantle barriers by (1) increasing language access to government services for frontline communities, including access to information relating to COVID-19; (2) implement across the board implicit bias training for all city workers; and (3) shift funding to support services that pivot at-risk residents away from the criminal justice system and towards the help they need.

3. Do you support reducing the budget of the Honolulu 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?

YES

NO

Type response here. Max 150 words.

I'm strongly opposed to reducing police officers' pay and benefits, but we have leaned too heavily on law enforcement for issues that require support services. This has limited success in the lives of those experiencing mental health and substance abuse challenges, and it overburdens our law enforcement officers with tasks they are not always prepared to do. I support allocating more resources for mental health and substance abuse treatment, shifting funds to support services that pivot at-risk residents away from the criminal justice system and towards the help they need, supporting community policing so officers can build trust and relationships in the community while being able to respond quickly, and funding diversion programs that connect youth, non-violent, and first-time offenders to support services. I will also expand partnerships between the City and service providers, such as those that work with domestic violence and sexual assault survivors and other vulnerable groups.

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

YES

NO

Type response here. Max 150 words.

It is important that the Police Commission be able to provide meaningful oversight over law enforcement. This includes a greater role in department policy, administration, and investigations of wrongdoing. I believe that this is a critical area where trust in government among our residents has deteriorated. I would work to restore that trust by increasing transparency and the tools available to the Police Commission to ensure our Police Department meets the highest standards.

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

NO

Type response here. Max 150 words.

I commit to relying on data, science, and evidence-based practices as Mayor. I will continue to follow the advice of our medical professionals and public health experts to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Housing and Urban Development is providing funding to support services and housing options for those experiencing homelessness at rates many times higher than a typical year. Now is the time to leverage those resources to stand up innovative models that have been piloted for years and can serve the needs of our community right. The funding being provided would be sufficient to fund a second Kahauiki Village, a project I was proud to work on, which now houses nearly 600 previously homeless persons, including 300 children.

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

NO

Type response here. Max 150 words.

I will fully fund Housing First programs and incorporate lessons learned to meet our housing needs at a much larger scale. My experience with Kahauiki Village, a public-private partnership with the city to create housing for nearly 600 people who were previously houseless, including over 300 children, has made it clear to me that city leaders can and must do more for our families. While I support the sidewalk nuisance and stored property ordinances, enforcement must be focused. Many houseless persons experience houselessness through no fault of their own - including due to mental health concerns, cost of living, and trauma induced behaviors. I will not support enforcements if there are not reasonable options for shelter. The larger issue is how do we address the needs of people who feel that the sidewalk is their only option.

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 the City and County of Honolulu?

YES

NO

Type response here. Max 150 words.

A recent study by the National Institute of Standards and Technology found that the majority of facial recognition technology programs exhibited disproportionate rates of error when analyzing the faces of women and people of color. A false match can lead to false arrests and have a serious impact on peoples' lives. In addition, it can run afoul of the Fourth Amendment's privacy rights by allowing undetectable and persistent government surveillance. Any facial recognition technology must be heavily scrutinized, meet all the applicable legal standards, and not be used in a way that infringes on individuals constitutional rights.