



ChamberPAC

Building a brighter and bolder future for Hawaii

NAME: **Jacob Aki**

RACE & DISTRICT: **Honolulu City Council – District 7**

WHY ARE YOU RUNNING FOR ELECTED OFFICE?

As someone who grew up in public housing, I've lived the struggle that many people in our communities face every day. Poverty, domestic violence and lack of economic opportunities were challenges that I faced growing up as a kid in Kalihi. Fortunately, through education, I was able to overcome these obstacles and create a better life for my family.

I'm running for Honolulu City Council because we need leaders who know the struggle and will fight for the issues impacting our communities.

I'm the only candidate in this race with experience working at all levels of government. My unmatched record of leadership and service puts me in the best position to serve our community and hit the ground running on day one

Please answer the following questions (max word count: 300 per question)

1. If elected, what would be your first priority to help Hawaii's businesses recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?

If elected to the City Council, my first priority would be to formulate a concrete action plan for reopening our local economy. We need to get people back to work, plain and simple. I believe that we can proceed with a reopening of our economy while also ensuring the health and safety of our community.

Reopening our economy won't happen overnight and we need our government to provide a detailed plan on when these efforts might take place; or at least provide some type of guidance.

I'd also prioritize the development of statewide financial relief program for businesses. Hawai'i is one of eleven states that lack a comprehensive relief

program and we have the ability to use some of the CARES funding to help fund these efforts.

2. How would you prioritize the needs of Hawaii's business community in COVID-19 response and recovery measures?

I would prioritize the needs of Hawai'i's business community by making sure that they are included in the formulation of our COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Many of the policies that have been implemented lack common-sense (i.e. mandating that everyone wears a face mask but asking fabric stores to shut down) and have been burdensome for many local businesses.

As mentioned in Question #1, Hawai'i still lacks a statewide financial relief program for businesses. Having the business community involved in these efforts would help with the formulation of a comprehensive relief plan for our local businesses.

3. Businesses are concerned about the lack of government transparency, particularly with information surrounding COVID – on everything from decision making on mandates to locations of COVID cases. What are your thoughts on government transparency and what improvements would you make?

Government definitely needs to be more transparent when it comes to its COVID-19 response efforts. Their inability to communicate and set a clear path forward toward economic stabilization and recovery has negatively impacted many local residents

I keep saying this, but to improve government transparency and communication, we need to include the business community in the decision-making process.

4. We regularly hear from our members about the difficulties with the permitting processes. What are your thoughts on how these processes for business can be improved upon and expedited?

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to upgrade technology infrastructure at all levels of government. While there has been some progress, many of the current technology infrastructure at the city level are outdated and/or lack proper instructional training for staff on how to use the technology.

The inefficiencies of the Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) has been a contentious issue for years. A recent audit of DPP has found, that despite having the needed technology in place to improve the efficiency,

effectiveness and output of building permits, the technology was not being properly used due to lack of training by employees and other related staffing issues.

If elected to the City Council, I am committed to working with the Mayor to resolve staffing issues by mandating proper training for all employees on how to use the e-permitting system; and work to address bureaucratic barriers that have been plaguing the department.

5. We regularly hear from our members about the difficulties with the permitting processes. What are your thoughts on how these processes for business can be improved upon and expedited?

I am a strong proponent for sustainability and reducing plastic use in Hawai'i and I am truly committed to realizing our state's energy goals by 2045. However, in order to do so, that government will need to work hand-in-hand with the business community.

While I strongly support the intent of Bill 25 and Bill 40, I did not agree with the legislative style in which these bills were passed.

In regard to Bill 40, I spoke with many local businesses and food manufactures in my district about the measure. They were very disappointed in the way that they were treated by members of the City Council, particularly the District VII councilmember

Instead of promoting collaborative efforts to address the issue, the District VII councilmember failed to consult with their district's business community; many of whom would be directly impacted by the bill. And when the business community went to the City Council to present their concern with the measure, they were berated members of the council.

These bills address very important issues, but I believe that more time should have been given for deliberations; and to work with all parties (not just one) to find a reasonable compromise.