



Hawai'i Island Prosecutorial Candidate Survey

All candidates for the 2020 race for Honolulu Prosecutor received a request to complete this questionnaire, created by the ACLU of Hawaii's Campaign for Smart Justice Hawai'i. The Smart Justice campaign is an initiative focused on reducing mass incarceration by fifty percent while tackling the racial disparities in the criminal legal system. Learn more at www.aclu.org/smartjustice.

The questionnaire consists of 17 questions total; 16 Yes/No questions and one free form question on COVID-19. Where neither "Yes" nor "No" is selected, the response was recorded as "No position taken." Responses were recorded on June 1, 2020.

[Question 1. Do you think Hawai'i relies too heavily on incarceration?](#)

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – No

In Hawai'i County, I believe there is an emphasis on rehabilitation and treatment rather than general incarceration for most defendants. Defendants that receive longer incarceration terms are generally those that have a long and repeated history of crime, where court-mandated supervision, treatment, and/or rehabilitation have not been effective.

[Question 2. Do you think Hawaii's jails are overcrowded?](#)

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – Yes

Hawai'i County needs better facilities for treatment, education, rehabilitation, and housing for inmates. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance that we come together and discuss long-term solutions for the overcrowding of our jails and prisons.

[Question 3. Do you have a specific decarceration goal?](#)



Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – Yes

Every case and defendant should be considered independently, being mindful of community safety, rehabilitation options, and reintegration. We need to address the root causes of crime, such as mental health, substance addiction, and reaching at risk youth and disadvantaged communities. I believe that by applying a multifaceted approach in identifying and seeking stiffer penalties for serious and repeat offenders, promoting rehabilitation and treatment for those suffering from addiction and mental illness, and utilizing available resources toward prevention and education, we can eventually decrease the number of persons incarcerated in Hawai'i's correctional facilities.

[Question 4. Do you agree with expanding the use of diversion programs?](#)

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen - Yes

Long-term incarceration is effective and appropriate in certain circumstances, including serious and violent offenses. However, the initial response to crime should be through a combination of prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, education, and reintegration.

[Question 5. Do you commit to being a vocal advocate for criminal legal reform at the Capitol?](#)

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen - Yes

The safety of our community depends on leaders being willing and able to adapt to the changing needs of the public. Considering evolving approaches to crime should be part of every criminal justice agency.

[Question 6. Do you acknowledge there is implicit bias in the criminal legal system in Hawaii?](#)



Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen - No

I acknowledge that implicit biases exist in our society; however, the Hawai`i County Prosecutor's Office treats everyone equally under the law. Prosecutors, judges, and defense attorneys within our legal system have an ethical obligation to not allow implicit biases to impact their decisions. Self-awareness and proper training are tools used to help deal with implicit biases. In order to ensure that we do not allow implicit biases to influence our decisions, I will provide all prosecuting attorneys within the Prosecutor's Office with continuing education and training regarding implicit biases and work with them to make sure they are knowledgeable about all sentencing options, including alternatives to incarceration.

[Question 7. Do you acknowledge that systemic racism exists in the criminal legal system in Hawaii?](#)

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen - No

Unlike other parts of the United States, I believe that Hawai`i County is fortunate in that there is a general culture of inclusiveness, aloha, and respect. As Native Hawaiian, I am aware of the historical inequalities and injustices that Native Hawaiians and other minorities have faced over the years. I recognize that there are a disproportionate number of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice system. I believe this is a result of a number of factors, such as lack of economic opportunities, housing, services, funding, and support for Native Hawaiians and other minorities in our community. Individual and systemic racism still exist in society and we need to do more to combat racism. I also recognize that the existence of systemic racism within Hawai`i County affects our criminal justice system. In order to address the root causes of inequality and injustices, we need to provide more opportunities, assistance, and services for Native Hawaiians and other minorities. In addition, due to the lack of correctional facilities in Hawai`i, inmates are often sent to serve prison terms thousands of miles away from their culture, family, and home. As a result, these individuals often encounter difficulties reintegrating back into society. We need to focus on reintegration and rehabilitation



to help all individuals by working with probation/parole supervision and assisting their transition back into society through all available service providers.

Question 8. Do you have a clear plan to combat racism in the criminal legal system in Hawaii?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – Yes

Although crimes and defendants must be considered independently, guidelines and systems must be in place for the fair treatment of all, including defendants, law enforcement, witnesses, and victims. This requires awareness and education in historical inequalities and injustices within the wider justice system and a continued vigilance toward true equal application of the criminal justice system.

Question 9. Will you begin race and ethnicity data collection explicitly as it relates to prosecutions?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – Yes

I would support data collection for race and ethnicity as it relates to prosecutions. I would need to work to ensure that our office has the necessary equipment, funding, and capability to collect such data. At present, the Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division of the Office of the Attorney General compiles data of offenders who are arrested for certain enumerated offenses.

Question 10. Will your office commit to not seeking money bail as a condition of release?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – No

I believe that reasonable and appropriate bail is an effective method of ensuring defendants return to court for their court commitments. When setting bail amounts, it is important to consider a defendant's prior criminal history, including



court appearance record, and a defendant's financial means, as well as any danger a defendant may pose to the community.

Question 11. Will your office pledge to recommend for all legally permissible cases presumptive release of defendants without financial conditions attached?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – No

Release is legally permissible in all cases. However, there are many cases where there is a clear danger to certain individuals or the general public. A general policy of presumptive release cannot be recommended.

Question 12. Do you support posting all office policies and procedures on the prosecutor's website?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – Yes

As a general matter, I support the posting of our office's policies and procedures on our website, with certain exceptions. Transparency is important and general policies and procedures should be made available. However, I recognize that certain internal policies and procedures need to be kept secure for the administration of the office and its commitment to serving the public.

Question 13. Do you support collecting and releasing data annually on decision making?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – No

I support prosecutorial transparency and believe that new policies need to be implemented to improve transparency and accountability. However, a blanket policy of annual reporting of all decisions can distract, if not negatively impact the administration of equal justice. Our office and its attorneys should be focusing on ensuring that justice is served, rather than focusing on statistic driven results. I



am committed to working with leaders and members of our community to find a way to enhance transparency and accountability, while balancing the needs and operations of the office.

Question 14. Do you support an independent prosecuting unit for police involved shootings, sexual assault by law enforcement officers, excessive force and other police misconduct cases?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – Yes

As a general matter, our office refers these types of cases to the Attorney General and/or another county's prosecutor's office for review to avoid any potential conflict or imputed appearance of impropriety. I would continue this practice.

Question 15. Do you commit to not prosecuting juvenile status offenses (such as truancy curfew running away) and tobacco and vaping offenses?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen – No

Not entirely. At present, our office generally does not prosecute status offenses unless a juvenile probationer violates a term and/or condition of probation by committing a status offense. In those limited circumstances, our office may seek a sanction related to the violation of the juvenile's probation. As for tobacco and vaping offenses, those offenses are law violations and our office should be committed to following the law. With that being said, there should be a greater emphasis placed on providing early prevention and treatment for juveniles.

Question 16. Do you commit to developing and implementing a community engagement plan that includes communities of color, the immigrant community based organizations and criminal legal reform advocates in the development of your first 100 day plan?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response



Kelden Waltjen – Yes

I believe that the best way to serve the people of Hawai'i County is to take an inclusive, community-based approach that engages all members of the community. Listening, learning, and seeking community input will be an integral part of my administration.

Question 17. In light of the COVID 19 virus what are your thoughts on releasing vulnerable populations non violent offenders and people incarcerated simply because they cannot afford bail?

Christopher Bridges – No response

Jared Kamakakulani Auna – No response

Kelden Waltjen -

Over the past few months, there has been a collaborative effort by various government agencies, including the State Judiciary, the Hawai'i County Police Department, the Prosecutor's Office, the Public Defender's Office, Department of Public Safety, and Special Master Judge Foley to reduce the inmate population in compliance with the Hawai'i Supreme Court's orders. As of June 1, 2020, there have been no reported cases of COVID-19 within the Hawai'i Island's correctional facilities and we have seen a significant reduction of the inmate population since March. Kulani Correctional Facility is below design capacity and the Hawai'i Community Correctional Center is now just slightly over capacity. I agree that vulnerable, non-violent offenders should continue to be carefully considered for release. At the same time, a number of repeat offenders who have been granted release for COVID-19 concerns have been charged with subsequent offenses while out on release. The balance of public safety and the safety of incarcerated individuals is a challenging issue and should continue to be closely considered on a case-by-case basis.