

Marzo, Roth on Health Care  
By Community First

Community First is a Hawaii Island based nonprofit founded in 2014 by Barry Taniguchi. We serve as a neutral forum for the Community to come together to find solutions to improve health and lower medical costs based on the Community good. We believe that healthcare is caring for health and not just treating disease and caring for health is “All Our Kuleana.”

It will take a community to realize the Triple Aim of better health, better care, and lower costs. We believe that our community deserves the best care possible and that together we can make this a reality.

This upcoming election is critical not just at the Federal and State level, but most importantly for us at the County level. True leadership is revealed in times of crisis and as we continue to live in very uncertain times, we felt it would be good to better understand our two Mayoral candidates’ thoughts on community health and safety and asked both candidates to provide responses to these two questions:

1. Do you consider healthcare to be a state or county issue, and why?
2. As mayor, how would you improve our community response to COVID-19?

Ikaika Marzo:

*1. Everyone from State and County to workplaces and organizations, to people and families, share the burden of issues surrounding healthcare. The County can help our people enroll to receive all the eligible healthcare they are entitled to through State and federal programs. The County can make sure there is infrastructure for telemedicine. The County can facilitate business both for new health care start-ups and for expanding the health care infrastructure we already have.*

*COVID-19 has exposed gaps within our community, such as our most vulnerable people struggling to get food deliveries and medical care while staying home distancing for safety. We need to anticipate these shortcomings and malama our kūpuna and people. Our County cannot rely on State and federal policies to address the concerns of all residents, as some will fall through the cracks. In those cases, it falls on the County to identify and address these outstanding issues in our community.*

*2. Our island’s kūpuna and those with preexisting conditions are the most at risk and require extra precautions and care. Nursing homes and elderly care are particularly vulnerable*

Published Sunday, September 27, 2020

*and need further special attention to protect residents, such as additional policies and screenings.*

*Our local economy is also at great risk, and bold policies are needed to restore and create new jobs. We can only sustain our livelihoods if we can implement effective health protocols. We must stimulate the less impacted sectors of our economy in the short-term while the pandemic persists, while diversifying our economy to compliment the return of tourism in the long-term.*

*One of the best ways to improve our island's response is through pooled testing and rapid testing. We need to detect a rise in case numbers ahead of our current PCR testing of individuals by utilizing faster, more economical tests, and monitoring COVID-19 levels in sewage in dense population areas. We need to collect near real-time data, and the only way to do that is through better testing.*

Mitch Roth:

*1. In broad terms, healthcare is an issue that affects the county and its people. However, healthcare from a legislative standpoint is a state issue. As Mayor I will advocate for healthcare reform and funding at the state level. I would also work to improve access to healthcare by improving mass transit and working to improve our technological infrastructure which will allow more residence to obtain healthcare services.*

*2. As mayor, I would improve Hawaii County's response to COVID-19 by disseminating more timely and frequent communication to the community. I would also look for solutions to support our community and small retail businesses and mom and pop shops.*

We thank Ikaika and Mitch for their comments and hope they were informative for you.