

## **TRISH LA CHICA**

### **HOTELPAC – 2020 Candidate Questionnaire (State)**

#### **1) The future of tourism in Hawai‘i**

Despite tourism’s status as one of our state’s top economic drivers, the COVID-19 pandemic has led some to call for our economy to diversify away from tourism. HLTA’s longstanding position has been that our economy should look to diversify within tourism, i.e., develop and expand industries that complement tourism. Would you support this policy given the challenge of identifying industries that could immediately replace the number of jobs and revenue tourism generates for our state’s economy? If not, what are your proposals for diversification?

1. I do believe that Hawaii has the opportunity to shift some of our workforce into green jobs, local food production, technology and innovation, health care, clean energy and natural resource management. All of this also helps Hawaii to become more resilient in the face of future disasters.
2. Rather than try to replace the tourist industry, a better strategy is to try and make tourism work better. For example, if tourism is creating a burden on the local population, the government could divert some of the revenue to build affordable housing or better infrastructure in a particular community.
3. I also believe in promoting ‘sustainable’ tourism. For example, limiting the number of tourists who visit our parks and trails and making sure that the funds from tourism go into improving the quality of life for locals.
4. Tourism has brought many benefits and jobs to our local economy and I would like to learn how to continue to support the industry in a sustainable way.

#### **2) Tourism Management**

HLTA has long maintained that we believe in the “quality” tourism model rather than the “quantity” tourism model. Effective execution of this responsible management model takes many forms, one being the establishment of user impact fees at popular visitor attractions such as O‘ahu’s Hanauma Bay. Do you support user impact fees? Do you have other ideas that would embrace this model?

- Yes, see my answer above re: sustainable tourism. We can also raise fees for certain permits in well-trafficked trails and camp sites. Increased fees in rental cars can also go back to improving transportation and biking/walking infrastructure for locals.

#### **3) Funding for the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority**

In FY2019, the State collected \$600.3 million in TAT revenue, of which \$79 million was allocated to the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority. The severe decline in TAT revenues means that future funding is in jeopardy for vital visitor industry marketing and support, public services provided by the counties, and other recipients of that money. With tourism-derived revenue expected to remain low or non-existent for many months to come—at a time when HTA marketing support for the industry will be most needed—would you be in favor of reallocating other State revenues to the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority and mandated recipients of TAT funding to enable the visitor industry to reopen and rebuild?

- I do believe that the HTA does a great job promoting responsible tourism in Hawaii. While I am unsure about maintaining existing funding levels when all state departments are affected by budget cuts, I am willing to learn how to keep HTA sustainable.

#### **4) Homelessness Solutions**

In recent years, HLTA has worked with the HTA and Legislature to administer and allocate \$1 million in State matching funds to address homelessness. Would you support a similar measure that would provide

funds for this initiative? Moreover, how would you work with the visitor industry to address homelessness statewide?

- Yes I support any sector's involvement in addressing our chronic homelessness issues. While the visitor industry can help support important high-need programs like shelter, meals, and housing, I would also like to work with the industry in supporting programs that work on addressing the root causes of homelessness. Mental health, housing, and family trauma.

### **5) Sustainability in the Visitor Industry**

Hawai'i's visitor industry has gone to great lengths to make its businesses more "green" and eco-friendly. What government incentives would you propose or support to help our industry bolster these initiatives?

- I truly believe that locally-owned businesses play a central role in a healthy economy and provide a pathway for advancing economic opportunity. Some initiatives include: setting aside green space in new developments, promoting pedestrian-oriented business districts (like Chinatown), working with the City to establish permit waivers to converting vacant historic buildings to be used for new businesses for local entrepreneurs, and continue to expand programs that provide access to loans for small businesses.

### **6) Visitor Industry Health, Safety & Security Standards**

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread throughout our state, it became clear that establishing health and hygiene standards would be critical to restoring trust in our industry. As such, we developed the HLTA Health, Safety & Security Standards. These were created after reviewing the latest information from the CDC, WHO, and EPA, as well as input from industry stakeholders. Our standards were submitted to the State Department of Health for its review. After receiving DOH approval, we shared our standards with the governor, HI-EMA, State Attorney General, and all the mayors. Please answer yes or no: Would you support the adoption of our standards as statewide policy for lodging properties? If not, please explain. [HLTA Health, Safety, & Security Standards – Click to view](#)

- Yes

**7) Aloha Stadium Development** There appears to be ample public and legislative support for the replacement of aging Aloha Stadium, in which the State would use a public-private partnership to construct a new stadium and transit-oriented development to create opportunities for housing, commercial, and/or industrial growth. With the State government facing an austere financial future, do you support proceeding with the public-private partnership to replace the stadium and develop the site, including authorizing a State investment in this project? If not, why?

- Yes, I support the reasons Sen Wakai provided in advocating for the project.

### **8) COVID-19 Response**

State officials have been roundly criticized both for the efficacy of their efforts to quell the spread of COVID-19, as well as the way in which they have communicated with the public during this crisis. Do you agree with this criticism? If so, how would you have handled this public health emergency differently? If not, please explain.

- Yes. Hawaii's experiences in crisis management from the major natural disasters in the last two years (Kilauea eruption and Kauai flooding) should have prepared our governor well to act decisively, communicate effectively with the public and work cooperatively with the Legislature during the crisis. Unfortunately, the response was still slow and Hawaii's stay-at-home order was only issued 17 days after the state's first COVID-19 case.

- We need good communication to allay fears and confusion. We should not expect the public to tune in to daily press conferences and legislative hearings just to get information. Leaders such as Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern have been widely praised for their reassuring leadership, helping the public understand that they have to be part of the solution despite not knowing when the crisis will end.
- In addition to having effective public communication, I would have expanded testing early by waiving the requirement that a primary care provider's orders are necessary to receive any kind of COVID-19 test so that individuals without health insurance or access to a PCP can get tested.
- Finally, I believe that public health and medical experts should be at the table, jointly leading the statewide response in accelerating emergency planning, coordinating interagency and cross-sector relationships, prioritizing public safety, and mobilizing the distribution of resources, such as personal protective equipment, across all islands.

**9)** If elected, what do you hope to accomplish during your first year in office, which will undoubtedly be one of the most challenging and difficult times the state and counties have ever faced.

- My immediate legislative priorities would be to:
- To prioritize an equitable, inclusive, and community-led response to the COVID-19 crisis.
- Continue to fund critical public programs such as healthy food access
- Work with our schools to provide flexibility needed so students can engage with schoolwork at any time that works for them. Focus on proficiency, skills, and knowledge rather than time spent in class. Prohibit punitive approaches to youth.
- Support working families, continue telework, and provide paid sick leave
- Invest in critical infrastructure to provide all households with high-speed broadband.
- Continue strengthening our public health infrastructure
- Prioritize housing insecurity and homelessness.

**10)** Please share with us one fun fact about yourself.

- If elected, I will be the first Filipina immigrant to be elected in the State House and the only legislator who has a strong public health and healthcare background.
- I also make a mean batch of salted chocolate chip caramel cookies that I make for all my neighbors each year during the holidays.