



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 2, 2015

Ms. Tiffany Evans  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Houston  
P.O. Box 368  
Houston, Texas 77001-0368

OR2015-13393

Dear Ms. Evans:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 569943 (GC No. 22277).

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specific taxicab operator. The city states it will release some information. The city states it will withhold certain information pursuant to sections 552.130(c) and 552.147(b) of the Government Code and under section 552.137 of the Government Code in accordance with Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).<sup>1</sup> The city claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the city claims and reviewed the submitted information.

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<sup>1</sup>Section 552.130(c) of the Government Code allows a governmental body to redact the information described in subsection 552.130(a) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.130(e). *See id.* § 552.130(d), (e). Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. *Id.* § 552.147(b). Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold certain categories of information, including e-mail addresses of members of the public under section 552.137 of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information made confidential by the Medical Practice Act (“MPA”), subtitle B of title 3 of the Occupations Code. Section 159.002 of the MPA provides, in relevant part:

(a) A communication between a physician and a patient, relative to or in connection with any professional services as a physician to the patient, is confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.

(b) A record of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by a physician that is created or maintained by a physician is confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.

(c) A person who receives information from a confidential communication or record as described by this chapter, other than a person listed in Section 159.004 who is acting on the patient’s behalf, may not disclose the information except to the extent that disclosure is consistent with the authorized purposes for which the information was first obtained.

Occ. Code § 159.002(a)-(c). This office has concluded the protection afforded by section 159.002 extends only to records created by either a physician or someone under the supervision of a physician. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 487 (1987), 370 (1983), 343 (1982). Upon review, we find the information we have marked constitutes a medical record subject to the MPA. Thus, the city must withhold this information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in accordance with the MPA. We note the remaining information the city seeks to withhold includes the results of a drug test. Section 159.001 of the MPA defines “patient” as “a person who, to receive medical care, consults with or is seen by a physician.” Occ. Code § 159.001(3). Because the individual at issue in the report did not receive medical care in the administration of the drug test, this individual is not a patient for purposes of section 159.002. Additionally, we find none of the remaining information constitutes a medical record subject to the MPA, and thus, the city may not withhold any of the remaining information on that basis.

Section 552.101 also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered highly intimate or embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. We note, however, the dates of birth of living members of the public are not protected by common-law

privacy under section 552.101. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 at 7 (1987) (home addresses, telephone numbers, and dates of birth not private). Upon review, we find none of the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest and thus, none of it may be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code on the basis of common-law privacy.

In summary, the city must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in accordance with the MPA. The city must release the remaining information.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl\\_ruling\\_info.shtml](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Rahat Huq  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

RSH/dls

Ref: ID# 569943

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)