



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 30, 2015

Ms. Nycia D. Deal
General Counsel
State Board of Dental Examiners
333 Guadalupe, Tower 3, Suite 800
Austin, Texas 78701-3942

OR2015-15615

Dear Ms. Deal:

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# 573490.

The Board of Dental Examiners (the "board") received a request for information. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim.

Initially, we must address the board's obligations under section 552.301 of the Government Code when requesting a decision from this office under the Act. Pursuant to section 552.301(b), a governmental body must ask for a decision from this office and state the exceptions that apply within ten business days of receiving the written request for information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b). Pursuant to section 552.301(e) of the Government Code, a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request: (1) written comments stating the reasons why the claimed exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. *Id.* § 552.301(e). As of the date of this letter, you have not submitted a copy of the information required by section 552.301(e). Consequently, we find the board failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301 in requesting this decision from our office.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with section 552.301 results in the legal presumption the requested information is public and must be released unless a compelling reason exists to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a compelling reason to withhold information exists where some other source of law makes the information confidential or where third party interests are at stake. Open Records Decision No. 150 at 2 (1977). Although you raise section 552.101 of the Government Code, the board has not submitted the requested information to this office for our review. Thus, we have no basis for finding it confidential under this mandatory exception. Therefore, we have no choice but to order the board to release the responsive information in accordance with section 552.302 of the Government Code. If the board believes the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, the board must challenge this ruling in court pursuant to 552.324 of the Government Code.

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, 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,



Cole Hutchison
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CH/dls

Ref: ID# 573490

c: Requestor