



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 13, 2016

Ms. Jessica Escobar
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 12847
Austin, Texas 78711

OR2016-08246

Dear Ms. Escobar:

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# 605717 (TDA PIR 16-409).

The Texas Department of Agriculture (the "department") received a request for a specified investigation report. You state the department has released some of the requested information. You claim portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

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 the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be

¹You acknowledge the department failed to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b) (requiring governmental body to ask for ruling and state exceptions that apply within ten business days of receiving written request). Nonetheless, as section 552.101 is a mandatory exception that can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness caused by a failure to comply with section 552.301, we will consider its applicability to the submitted information. *See id.* §§ 552.007, .302, .352.

²We assume the submitted representative sample of information is truly representative of the requested information as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This ruling does not reach, and therefore does not authorize, the withholding of any other requested information to the extent that the other information is substantially different than that submitted to this office. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301(e)(1)(D), .302; Open Records Decision Nos. 499 at 6 (1988), 497 at 4 (1988).

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 intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. See Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). Upon review, we find the information we marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we find you have not demonstrated the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Therefore, none of the remaining information may be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. As you raise no further exceptions to disclosure, the department 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, 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,



Ian Lancaster
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

IML/bhf

Ref: ID# 605717

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)