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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 7, 2016

Mr. Kevin D. Cullen
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P.O. Box 2938
Victoria, Texas 77902-2938

OR2016-12959

Dear Mr. Cullen:

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# 613195.

Citizens Medical Center (the "center"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified agreement. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim.

We must address the center's obligations under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code prescribes the procedures a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), 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). The center received the request for information on March 21, 2016. As of this date, you have not submitted to this office a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we conclude the center failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301.

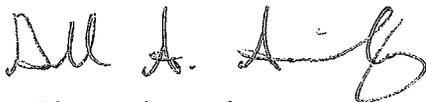
Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption the

requested information is public and must be released. Information that is presumed public must be released unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information to overcome this presumption. *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 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a governmental body may demonstrate a compelling reason to withhold information by showing the information is made confidential by another source of law or affects third-party interests. *See* ORD 630. You assert the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. However, section 552.103 is a discretionary exception to disclosure and may be waived. *See* Gov't Code § 552.007; *Dallas Area Rapid Transit v. Dallas Morning News*, 4 S.W.3d 469, 475-76 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no pet.) (governmental body may waive Gov't Code § 552.103); Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions). In failing to comply with the requirements of section 552.301, you have waived the center's claim under section 552.103; therefore, the center may not withhold the requested information on that basis. Consequently, we have no choice but to order the requested information released pursuant to section 552.302.

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,



Gerald A. Arismendez
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

GAA/dls

Ref: ID# 613195

c: Requestor