



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 27, 2019

Ms. Cary Grace  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Austin  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, Texas 78767-8828

OR2019-05499

Dear Ms. Grace:

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# 752482 (Z002265).

The Austin Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified investigation. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, you acknowledge, and we agree, the department failed to meet the statutory deadlines imposed by section 552.301 of the Government Code for the requested information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b), (e). Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless there is a compelling reason to withhold

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<sup>1</sup>We note the department received a prior request for the same information from a different requestor on September 25, 2018. In response to the initial request, the department informs us it responded to the prior requestor within five business days and then withheld certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code, pursuant to the previous determination this office issued to the department in Open Records Letter No. 2016-10001 (2016). Subsequently, a different requestor made the instant request for the same information on November 13, 2018.

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 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ). The need of a governmental body, other than the governmental body that failed to timely seek an open records decision, to withhold information under section 552.108 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason sufficient to overcome the presumption of openness. *See* Open Records Decision No. 586 (1991). Because you inform us, and provide documentation showing, the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas (the "attorney's office") objects to the release of the information at issue, we will consider whether the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108 of the Government Code on behalf of the attorney's office.

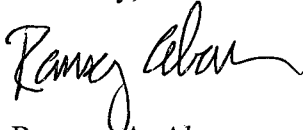
Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[I]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the attorney's office objects to the release of the information at issue because it pertains to a pending criminal prosecution. Based upon this representation, we conclude section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable, and the release of the information at issue would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information.

However, we note section 552.108 does not except from disclosure "basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime." Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-187; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Accordingly, with the exception of basic information, which must be released, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the attorney's office.

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,



Ramsey A. Abarca  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

RAA/som

Ref: ID# 752482

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)