



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 13, 2019

Ms. Ana Viera Ayala
Assistant General Counsel
Office of General Counsel
The University of Texas System
210 West Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2901

OR2019-06960

Dear Ms. Ayala:

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# 754549 (OGC# 186341).

The University of Texas at Arlington (the "university") received a request for contracts and invoices pertaining to two named companies. Although you take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, you state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Campus Labs, Inc. ("Campus Labs"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified Campus Labs of the request for information and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances). We have received comments from Campus Labs. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note Campus Labs argues against the release of information that was not submitted by the university. This ruling does not address information that was not submitted by the university and is limited to the information the university has submitted for our review. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(D) (governmental body requesting decision from attorney general must submit copy of specific information requested).

Section 552.104(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder.” Gov’t Code § 552.104(a). In considering whether a private third party may assert this exception, the supreme court reasoned because section 552.305(a) of the Government Code includes section 552.104 as an example of an exception that involves a third party’s property interest, a private third party may invoke this exception. *Boeing Co. v. Paxton*, 466 S.W.3d 831 (Tex. 2015). The “test under section 552.104 is whether knowing another bidder’s [or competitor’s information] would be an advantage, not whether it would be a decisive advantage.” *Id.* at 841. We understand Campus Labs has competitors. In addition, Campus Labs states the release of the information at issue “would severely impact the economic value of [its] current clientele portfolio as well as any potential business.” We note Campus Labs seeks to withhold terms of the contract. For many years, this office concluded the terms of a contract and especially the pricing of a winning bidder are public and generally not excepted from disclosure. Gov’t Code § 552.022(a)(3) (contract involving receipt or expenditure of public funds expressly made public); Open Records Decision Nos. 541 at 8 (1990) (public has interest in knowing terms of contract with state agency), 514 (1988) (public has interest in knowing prices charged by government contractors), 494 (1988) (requiring balancing of public interest in disclosure with competitive injury to company). *See generally* Freedom of Information Act Guide & Privacy Act Overview, 219 (2000) (federal cases applying analogous Freedom of Information Act reasoning that disclosure of prices charged government is a cost of doing business with government). However, now, pursuant to *Boeing*, section 552.104 is not limited to only ongoing competitive situations, and a third party need only show release of its competitively sensitive information would give an advantage to a competitor even after a contract is executed. *Boeing*, 466 S.W.3d 831, at 831, 842. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Campus Labs has established the release of the information at issue, which we have marked, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the university may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.¹ The university 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

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erin Groff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Erin Groff
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

EMG/eb

Ref: ID# 754549

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Third Party
(w/o enclosures)