



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 29, 2019

Ms. April R. Philley  
Associate  
Eichelbaum Wardell Hansen Powell & Mehl, P.C.  
4201 West Parmer Lane, Suite A-100  
Austin, Texas 78727

OR2019-08665

Dear Ms. Philley:

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# 757258.

The Mission Consolidated Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for a specified pharmacy benefit manager contract and claims report. Although you take no position regarding whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure, you state its release may implicate the proprietary interests of BlueCross BlueShield of Texas ("BlueCross"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified BlueCross of the request and its right to submit arguments to this office. *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 BlueCross. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

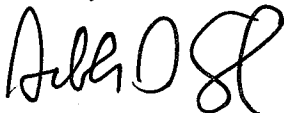
Section 552.104(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder." Gov't Code § 552.104(a). A private third party may invoke this exception. *Boeing Co. v. Paxton*, 466 S.W.3d 831 (Tex. 2015). The "test under section 552.104 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. BlueCross states it has competitors. In addition, BlueCross states release of its information at issue would provide its competitors with an advantage when

future bids are requested. We note BlueCross seeks to withhold some of the terms of a 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 at 839. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find BlueCross has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the district may withhold the information we marked under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> The district 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](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,



Deborah Southerland  
Attorney  
Open Records Division

DS/gw

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<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

Ref: ID# 757258

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

c: Third Party  
(w/o enclosures)