



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 24, 2019

Mr. Sid Pounds
Open Records Attorney
Texas Department of Insurance
P. O. Box 149104
Austin, Texas 78714

OR2019-17124

Dear Mr. Pounds:

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# 771984 (TDI# R003930).

The Texas Department of Insurance (the "department") received a request for a specified private passenger auto filing. Although the department takes 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 Hallmark County Mutual Insurance Company ("Hallmark"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified Hallmark of the request for information and of their 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 Hallmark. 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. Hallmark states it has competitors. In addition, Hallmark states release of the submitted information would give advantage to a competitor. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Hallmark has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.

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,



Kelly McWethy
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KSM/jxd

Ref: ID# 771984

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Third Party
(w/o enclosures)