



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 19, 2019

Ms. Lauren Downey
Assistant Attorney General
Public Information Coordinator
Office of the Attorney General
P.O. Box 12548
Austin, Texas 78711-2548

OR2019-26267

Dear Ms. Downey:

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# 785576 (PIR No. R001531).

The Office of the Attorney General (the "OAG") received a request for e-mails sent from two specified domain names.¹ The OAG states it will release some information. The OAG claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides in relevant part as follows:

¹ We understand the OAG sought and received clarification of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also* *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when a governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of an unclear or overbroad request for information, the ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

² We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

(a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). The governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show section 552.103(a) is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the governmental body received the request for information, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, orig. proceeding); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). The governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a).

To establish litigation is reasonably anticipated, a governmental body must provide this office "concrete evidence showing that the claim that litigation might ensue is more than mere conjecture." Open Records Decision No. 452 at 4 (1986). In the context of anticipated litigation in which the governmental body is the prospective plaintiff, the concrete evidence must at least reflect that litigation is "realistically contemplated." See Open Records Decision No. 518 at 5 (1989); see also Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982) (finding that investigatory file may be withheld from disclosure if governmental body attorney determines that it should be withheld pursuant to section 552.103 and that litigation is "reasonably likely to result"). Whether litigation is reasonably anticipated must be determined on a case-by-case basis. See ORD 452 at 4.

The OAG states its Consumer Protection Division (the "CPD") is investigating activity that may constitute violations of the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act. The OAG also states its Antitrust Division is involved in an investigation into potential violations of the Texas Free Enterprise and Antitrust Act. The OAG further states the CPD and the Antitrust Division initiated the investigations at issue for enforcement purposes. The OAG states if the CPD or the Antitrust Division uncover violations of law during these investigations, the OAG will initiate enforcement proceedings and, therefore, anticipates litigation in these

matters. Therefore, we find the OAG reasonably anticipated litigation when it received the present request for information. The OAG also states, at the time of the request, the OAG was involved in pending litigation representing the State of Texas in a lawsuit styled *State of Texas v. Purdue Pharma LP*, Cause No. D-1-GN-18-002403, in the 345th Judicial District Court of Travis County, Texas. Therefore, we agree litigation involving the OAG was pending on the date the OAG received the present request for information. The OAG asserts, and we agree, the information at issue relates to the anticipated and pending litigations. Accordingly, the OAG has demonstrated the applicability of section 552.103 to the submitted information and may withhold the submitted information under section 552.103 of the Government Code.

However, once the information has been obtained by all parties to the pending or anticipated litigation, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision No. 349 at 2 (1982). We also note the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends when litigation has concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 at 2 (1982); Open Records Decision Nos. 350 at 3 (1982), 349 at 2.).

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Matthew Taylor
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MHT/eb

Ref: ID# 785576

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)