



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 2, 2019

Mr. Stan Parker  
Sheriff  
Howard County  
P.O. Box 1149  
Big Spring, Texas 79721-1149

OR2019-27663

Dear Mr. Parker:

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# 788968.

The Howard County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information pertaining to the death of a named individual. You state you have released some information. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.


Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). Upon review, we find you have failed to demonstrate the submitted information is highly intimate or embarrassing

and not of legitimate public interest. Thus, the sheriff's office may not withhold any portion of the submitted information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. As no other arguments against disclosure have been raised, the submitted information must be released.

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,



Melanie Villars  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

MJV/gw

Ref: ID# 788968

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)