



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 3, 2019

Ms. Katheryne Ellison
Assistant General Counsel
Houston Independent School District
4400 West 18th Street
Houston, Texas 77092-8501

OR2019-27742

Dear Ms. Ellison:

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# 787826 (Ref. No. DDO071119).

The Houston Independent School District (the "district") received a request for personnel information pertaining to the requestor's client and all information sent to the Texas Education Agency (the "TEA") pertaining to a specified investigation. You state the district is withholding student-identifying information pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), section 1232g of title 20 of the United States Code.¹ You state the district will release some information to the requestor. 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 from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 21.062 of the Education Code, which provides, in part:

(a) During an investigation by the commissioner for an alleged incident of misconduct, the commissioner may issue a subpoena to compel:

¹ The United States Department of Education Family Policy Compliance Office (the "DOE") has informed this office FERPA does not permit state and local educational authorities to disclose to this office, without parental or an adult student's consent, unredacted, personally identifiable information contained in education records for the purpose of our review in the open records ruling process under the Act. The DOE has determined FERPA determinations must be made by the educational authority in possession of the educational records. A copy of this letter may be found on the Office of the Attorney General's website at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/divisions/open-government/20060725-USDOE-FERPA.pdf>.

(a) During an investigation by the commissioner for an alleged incident of misconduct, the commissioner may issue a subpoena to compel:

...

(2) the production, for inspection or copying, of relevant evidence that is located in this state.

...

(d) All information and materials subpoenaed or compiled in connection with an investigation described by Subsection (a) are confidential and not subject to disclosure under [the Act].

Educ. Code § 21.062(a)(2), (d); *see id.* §§ 5.001(3) (“Commissioner” means the commissioner of education), 21.001(1) (“Commissioner” includes a person designated by the commissioner). You state the submitted information was subpoenaed or compiled in an investigation of an educator conducted by the TEA under section 21.062 of the Education Code. You indicate the information at issue was submitted to the TEA in response to a subpoena issued by the commissioner. Based on these representations and our review, we conclude the district must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 21.062(d) of the Education Code.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,



Blake Brennan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

BBX/mo

² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

Ref: ID# 787826

c: Requestor