



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 18, 2019

Ms. Leandra C. Ortiz
Counsel for the South Texas Independent School District
Walsh Gallegos Trevino Russo & Kyle P.C.
6770 West Expressway 83, Suite 301
Harlingen, Texas 78552

OR2019-29344

Dear Ms. Ortiz:

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# 791996.

The South Texas Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for a named individual's personnel file and records related to the named individual being placed on leave. You state the district will release some information. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 through 552.154 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

We must address the district's procedural obligations under section 552.301 of the Government Code when requesting a decision from this office under the Act. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body must submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e). The district received the request at issue on July 23, 2019. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted written comments stating the reasons why the claimed exceptions apply or a copy or representative samples of the specific information requested. Consequently, we find the district failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301(e) in requesting this decision from our office.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with section 552.301 results in the legal presumption the requested information is public and must be released unless a compelling reason exists to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ). Although the district raises exceptions to disclosure, because you have not submitted the requested information for our review, we have no basis for finding any of the information excepted from disclosure. Thus, we have no choice but to order the requested information released pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code. If the district believes the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, the district must challenge this ruling in court pursuant to section 552.324 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 <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,



Deborah Southerland
Attorney
Open Records Division

DS/mo

Ref: ID# 791996

c: Requestor