



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 21, 2019

Mr. Brett Norbraten  
Open Records Attorney  
Texas Health and Human Services Commission  
P.O. Box 13247  
Austin, Texas 78711-3247

OR2019-29642

Dear Mr. Norbraten:

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# 792426 (OR-20190802-19327).

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (the "commission") received a request for the most recent renewal license applications for a specified facility. 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 the Texas Abortion Facility Reporting and Licensing Act, chapter 245 of the Health and Safety Code. Section 245.011(d) provides:

Except as provided by Section 245.023, all information and records held by the [Department of State Health Services (the "department")<sup>1</sup>] under [chapter 245 of the Health and Safety Code] are confidential and are not open records for the purposes of [the Act]. That information may not be released or made public on subpoena or otherwise, except that release may be made:

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<sup>1</sup> We note the Eighty-Fourth Legislature passed Senate Bill 200, which as of September 1, 2017, transferred the licensing and regulation of abortion facilities from the department to the commission.

- (1) for statistical purposes, but only if a person, patient, physician performing an abortion, or abortion facility is not identified;
- (2) with the consent of each person, patient, physician, and abortion facility identified in the information released;
- (3) to medical personnel, appropriate state agencies, or county and district courts to enforce this chapter; or
- (4) to appropriate state licensing boards to enforce state licensing laws.

Health & Safety Code § 245.011(d). Section 245.023 of the Health and Safety Code provides in part:

(a) The department on request shall make the following information available to the public:

- (1) the status of the license of any abortion facility;
- (2) the date of the last inspection of the facility, any violation discovered during that inspection that would pose a health risk to a patient at the facility, any challenge raised by the facility to the allegation that there was a violation, and any corrective action that is acceptable to the department and that is being undertaken by the facility with respect to the violation; and
- (3) an administrative or civil penalty imposed against the facility or a physician who provides services at the facility, professional discipline imposed against a physician who provides services at the facility, and any criminal conviction of the facility or a physician who provides services at the facility that is relevant to services provided at the facility.

...

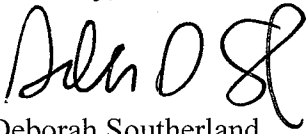
(e) This section does not authorize the release of the name, address, or phone number of any employee or patient of an abortion facility or of a physician who provides services at an abortion facility.

*Id.* § 245.023(a), (e). You state the submitted information, which pertains to abortion facilities, is governed by chapter 245 of the Health and Safety Code. You assert the current request does not fall within the four types of disclosure permitted under section 245.011(d). You also state the information at issue is not subject to section 254.023(a). Accordingly, the commission must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 245.011 of the Health and Safety 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deborah Southerland', written in a cursive style.

Deborah Southerland  
Attorney  
Open Records Division

DS/rm

Ref: ID# 792426

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)