



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 13, 2019

Ms. Courtney Ebeier
Attorney
Open Records Department
Texas Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 13247
Austin, Texas 78711-3247

OR2019-35320

Dear Ms. Ebeier:

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# 802205 (Reference No. 19992)

The Health and Human Services Commission (the "commission") received a request for a license renewal application 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 representative sample of information.¹

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")] under [chapter 245 of the Health and Safety Code] are confidential and are not open records

¹ 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 those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

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:

- (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.

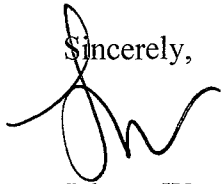
Id. § 245.023(a), (e). You state the submitted information, which pertains to abortion facilities, is governed by chapter 245 of the Health and Safety Code. You assert the current

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.

Finally, you request that this office issue a “previous determination” that would permit the commission to withhold such information pertaining to abortion facilities under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 245.011 of the Health and Safety Code without the need of requesting a ruling from us about whether such information can be withheld from disclosure. We decline to issue such a previous determination at this time. Accordingly, 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,



Jahanna Ward
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JW/be

Ref: ID# 802205

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)