



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 1, 2020

Ms. Katheryne Ellison  
Assistant General Counsel  
Houston Independent School District  
Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center  
4400 West 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
Houston, Texas 77092-8501

OR2020-09950

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# 823080 (Ref. No. 1012820).

The Houston Independent School District (the "district") received a request for two categories of information pertaining to a specified contract. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. You also state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Ace Mart Restaurant Supply; Advanced Blending, Inc., d/b/a Last Group Enterprises; Bioplant Corp.; Braun Beef Company; Calico Packaging, LLC; Daxwell; Edward Don & Company; Gordon Food Service; GTE Holdings, LLC; Interboro Packaging Corporation; Jake's Finer Foods; MyECOPlanet, LLC; Par-Pak, Inc., d/b/a WNA Houston; Pasco Brokerage, Inc.; and Plascon Packaging, Inc. Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified these interested third parties of the request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances). We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.104(a) of the Government Code excepts information from disclosure "if a governmental body demonstrates that release of the information would harm its interests by providing an advantage to a competitor or bidder in a particular ongoing competitive

situation or in a particular competitive situation where the governmental body establishes the situation at issue is set to reoccur or there is a specific and demonstrable intent to enter into the competitive situation again in the future.” Gov’t Code § 552.104(a). The “test under section 552.104 is whether knowing another bidder’s [or competitor’s information] would be an advantage, not whether it would be a decisive advantage.” *Boeing Co. v. Paxton*, 466 S.W.3d 831 (Tex. 2015). After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find the district has established the release of the information at issue would harm its interests by providing an advantage to a competitor or bidder in a particular competitive situation that is set to reoccur or for which the district has demonstrated there is a specific and demonstrable intent to enter into the competitive situation again in the future. Thus, we conclude the district may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104(a) 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,

Meredith L. Coffman  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

MLC/mo

Ref: ID# 823080

c: Requestor