



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 2, 2020

Mr. Jesse M. Blakley, Jr.
Assistant District Attorney
Brazoria County
111 East Locust, Suite 408A
Angleton, Texas 77515

OR2020-27444

Dear Mr. Blakley:

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# 852691 (Brazoria County Reference No. 20-2414).

The Galveston County Medical Examiner's Officer (the "medical examiner's office") received a request for all information pertaining to a specified autopsy. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). Section 552.108 may be invoked by any proper custodian of information relating to a pending investigation or prosecution of criminal conduct. *See Open Records Decision No. 474 at 4-5 (1987)* (section 552.108 may be invoked by any proper custodian of information relating to pending investigation or prosecution of criminal conduct). Where a non-law enforcement agency has custody of information relating to a pending case of a law enforcement agency, the custodian of records may withhold the information if it provides this office with a demonstration that

the information relates to a pending case and a representation from the law enforcement agency that it wishes to have the information withheld.

You state the submitted information pertains to an active criminal investigation or prosecution. Further, you explain the Brazoria County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office") objects to disclosure of the submitted information. Based on this representation and our review, we conclude release of the information at issue would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, we conclude the medical examiner's office may withhold submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the district attorney's office.

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,

Joseph Hoggatt
Attorney
Open Records Division

JWH/eb

Ref: ID# 852691

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)