



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 17, 2020

Mr. Cary D. Kirby
County Attorney
Angelina County Attorney's Office
P.O. Box 1845
Lufkin, Texas 75902-1845

OR2020-28739

Dear Mr. Kirby:

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# 853978.

The Angelina County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received two requests from the same requestor for specified pages from a named employee's personnel file. You state you have released some information to the requestor.¹ You claim a portion of the submitted information is not subject to the Act. You also claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.102, 552.108, 552.117, 552.1175, 552.130, 552.136, 552.137, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered your arguments and reviewed the submitted information. We have also received and considered comments from the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

Initially, you state the submitted information contains a peace officer's Texas Commission on Law Enforcement ("TCOLE") identification number. Section 552.002(a) of the Government Code defines "public information" as information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business:

(1) by a governmental body;

¹ You state the sheriff's office sought and received clarification of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also* *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when a governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of an unclear or overbroad request for information, the ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

(2) for a governmental body and the governmental body:

(A) owns the information;

(B) has a right of access to the information; or

(C) spends or contributes public money for the purpose of writing, producing, collecting, assembling, or maintaining the information; or

(3) by an individual officer or employee of a governmental body in the officer's or employee's official capacity and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body.

Id. § 552.002(a). In Open Records Decision No. 581 (1990), this office determined certain computer information, such as source codes, documentation information, and other computer programming, that has no significance other than its use as a tool for the maintenance, manipulation, or protection of public property is not the kind of information made public under section 552.021 of the Government Code. We understand an officer's TCOLE identification number is a unique computer-generated number assigned to peace officers for identification in the commissioner's electronic database and may be used as an access device number on the TCOLE website. Accordingly, we find the officer's TCOLE identification number in the submitted information does not constitute public information under section 552.002 of the Government Code. Therefore, the TCOLE identification number is not subject to the Act and need not be released to the requestor.²

Next, you assert the submitted college transcript is subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), section 1232g of title 20 of the United States Code. The United States Department of Education Family Policy Compliance Office (the "DOE") has informed this office that FERPA does not permit state and local educational authorities to disclose to this office, without parental or an adult student's consent, unredacted, personally identifiable information contained in education records for the purpose of our review in the open records ruling process under the Act.³ Consequently, education records that are responsive to a request for information under the Act should not be submitted to this office in unredacted form, that is, in a form in which "personally identifiable information" is disclosed. *See* 34 C.F.R. § 99.3 (defining "personally identifiable information"). We note the sheriff's office is not an educational agency or institution for purposes of FERPA. You state the sheriff's office received the transcript directly from the educational institutions at issue. Because our office is prohibited from reviewing education records to determine the applicability of FERPA, we will not address FERPA with respect to this transcript. Such determinations under FERPA must be made by the educational authority from which the

² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

³ A copy of this letter may be found on the Office of the Attorney General's website at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/divisions/open-government/20060725-USDOE-FERPA.pdf>.

records were obtained. Thus, the sheriff's office should contact the educational institution from which the transcript was obtained, as well as the DOE, regarding the applicability of FERPA to the information at issue.

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. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by chapter 411 of the Government Code, which makes confidential criminal history record information ("CHRI") generated by the National Crime Information Center or by the Texas Crime Information Center. *See id.* § 411.083(a). Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI that states obtain from the federal government or other states. Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual laws with respect to the CHRI it generates. *See id.* Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the Department of Public Safety ("DPS") maintains, except that DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F, or subchapter E-1 of the Government Code. *See Gov't Code* § 411.083(a). Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI; however, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *Id.* § 411.089(b)(1). Other entities specified in chapter 411 of the Government Code are entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS or another criminal justice agency; however, those entities may not release CHRI except as provided by chapter 411. *See generally id.* §§ 411.090-.127. Thus, any CHRI obtained from DPS or any other criminal justice agency must be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with chapter 411, subchapter F, of the Government Code. Upon review, we find a portion of the submitted information consists of CHRI that is confidential under section 411.083. Thus, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and federal law.⁴

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code, which governs the public availability of information submitted to TCOLE under subchapter J of chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code. Section 1701.454 provides as follows:

- (a) All information submitted to the commission under this subchapter is confidential and is not subject to disclosure under [the Act], unless the person resigned or was terminated due to substantiated incidents of excessive force or violations of the law other than traffic offenses.
- (b) Except as provided by this subchapter, a commission member or other person may not release information submitted under this subchapter.

Occ. Code § 1701.454. You seek to withhold some of the remaining information under section 1701.454. You state the information at issue was submitted to TCOLE under subchapter J of chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code. Accordingly, the sheriff's office

⁴ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of the information at issue.

must withhold the information at issue, which we marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 1701.306 of the Occupations Code, which makes confidential L-2 Declaration of Medical Condition and L-3 Declaration of Psychological and Emotional Health forms required by TCOLE. Section 1701.306 provides, in part:

(a) [TCOLE] may not issue a license to a person as an officer or county jailer unless the person is examined by:

(1) a licensed psychologist or by a psychiatrist who declares in writing that the person is in satisfactory psychological and emotional health to serve as the type of officer for which a license is sought; and

(2) a licensed physician who declares in writing that the person does not show any trace of drug dependency or illegal drug use after a physical examination, blood test, or other medical test.

(b) An agency hiring a person for whom a license as an officer or county jailer is sought shall select the examining physician and the examining psychologist or psychiatrist. The agency shall prepare a report of each declaration required by Subsection (a) and shall maintain a copy of the report on file in a format readily accessible to [TCOLE]. A declaration is not public information.

Id. § 1701.306(a)-(b). Therefore, the sheriff's office must withhold the submitted L-2 form under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 1701.306 of the Occupations Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information protected by section 1703.306 of the Occupations Code, which provides:

(a) A polygraph examiner, trainee, or employee of a polygraph examiner, or a person for whom a polygraph examination is conducted or an employee of the person, may not disclose information acquired from a polygraph examination to another person other than:

(1) the examinee or any other person specifically designated in writing by the examinee;

(2) the person that requested the examination;

(3) a member, or the member's agent, of a governmental agency that licenses a polygraph examiner or supervises or controls a polygraph examiner's activities;

(4) another polygraph examiner in private consultation; or

(5) any other person required by due process of law.

(b) The [Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation] or any other governmental agency that acquires information from a polygraph examination under this section shall maintain the confidentiality of the information.

(c) A polygraph examiner to whom information acquired from a polygraph examination is disclosed under Subsection (a)(4) may not disclose the information except as provided by this section.

Id. § 1703.306. Upon review, we find a portion of the remaining information at issue is information acquired from a polygraph examination. Thus, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 1703.306 of the Occupations Code. However, we find no portion of the remaining information was acquired from a polygraph examination and the sheriff's office may not withhold any portion of the remaining information on that basis.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information protected by section 730.004 of the Transportation Code, which provides "an agency may not disclose personal information about any person obtained by the agency in connection with a motor vehicle record." Transp. Code § 730.004. "Personal information" means "information that identifies a person," and includes a person's photograph, social security number, driver identification number, name, address but not zip code, telephone number, or medical and disability information. *Id.* § 730.003(6). DPS is an "agency" for purposes of chapter 730. *See id.* § 730.003(1) ("agency" is state agency that compiles or maintains motor vehicle records). You state some of the remaining information consists of records that were obtained by the sheriff's office from DPS. *See id.* § 730.007(a)(2)(A)(i) (personal information may be disclosed to government agency in carrying out its functions). An authorized recipient of personal information may not re-disclose the personal information and to do so is a misdemeanor offense. *Id.* § 730.013(a), (d). Accordingly, the sheriff's office must withhold the driver identification numbers, names, addresses but not zip codes, and medical or disability information of the individuals in the information the sheriff's office received from DPS under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with sections 730.004 and 730.013 of the Transportation Code.⁵

Section 552.102(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information in a personnel file, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." Gov't Code § 552.102(a). We understand you to assert the privacy analysis under section 552.102(a) is the same as the common-law privacy test under section 552.101 of the Government Code. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or

⁵ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). In *Hubert v. Harte-Hanks Texas Newspapers*, 652 S.W.2d 546 (Tex. App.—Austin 1983, writ ref'd n.r.e.), the Third Court of Appeals held the privacy test under section 552.102(a) is the same as the *Industrial Foundation* privacy test. However, the Texas Supreme Court expressly disagreed with *Hubert's* interpretation of section 552.102(a) and held the privacy standard under section 552.102(a) differs from the *Industrial Foundation* test under section 552.101. See *Tex. Comptroller of Pub. Accounts v. Attorney Gen. of Tex.*, 354 S.W.3d 336 (Tex. 2010). The Texas Supreme Court also considered the applicability of section 552.102(a) and held it excepts from disclosure the dates of birth of state employees in the payroll database of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. See *id.* at 348. Upon review, we find the sheriff's office must withhold the employee's date of birth under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code.⁶ However, no portion of the remaining information is subject to section 552.102, and the sheriff's office may not withhold any of the remaining information on that basis.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy. Common-law privacy protects information subject to the two-part test mentioned above. *Indus. Found.*, 540 S.W.2d at 685. To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Additionally, this office has found personal financial information not relating to a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is excepted from required public disclosure under common-law privacy. See Open Records Decision Nos. 523 (1989) (common-law privacy protects credit reports, financial statements, and other personal financial information), 373 (1983) (sources of income not related to financial transaction between individual and governmental body protected under common-law privacy). This office has also concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. See Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). However, this office has noted the public has a legitimate interest in information that relates to public employees and their conduct in the workplace. See, e.g., Open Records Decision Nos. 562 at 10 (1990) (personnel file information does not involve most intimate aspects of human affairs but in fact touches on matters of legitimate public concern), 470 at 4 (1987) (job performance does not generally constitute public employee's private affairs), 444 at 3 (1986) (public has obvious interest in information concerning qualifications and performance of government employees), 405 at 2 (1983) (manner in which public employee's job was performed cannot be said to be of minimal public interest), 329 (1982) (reasons for employee's resignation ordinarily not private). The Third Court of Appeals has concluded public citizens' dates of birth are protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. See *Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at *3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). We note some of the remaining information pertains to individuals who will be de-identified pursuant to sections 730.004 and 730.013 of the Transportation Code and whose privacy interests will, thus, be protected.

⁶ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

Upon review, we find some of the remaining information satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Thus, with the exception of the information we marked for release, the sheriff's office must withhold all identifiable public citizens' dates of birth, the information you marked, and the information we marked to withhold under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, you have failed to demonstrate any of the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest. Thus, the sheriff's office may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure the internal records and notations of law enforcement agencies and prosecutors when their release would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. Gov't Code § 552.108(b)(1); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 531 at 2 (1989) (quoting *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(b)(1) must explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.108(b)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706. Section 552.108(b)(1) is intended to protect "information which, if released, would permit private citizens to anticipate weaknesses in a police department, avoid detection, jeopardize officer safety, and generally undermine police efforts to effectuate the laws of this State." *See City of Fort Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320, 327 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no pet.). This office has concluded section 552.108(b)(1) excepts from public disclosure information relating to the security or operation of a law enforcement agency. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 (release of detailed use of force guidelines would unduly interfere with law enforcement), 252 (1980) (section 552.108 of the Government Code is designed to protect investigative techniques and procedures used in law enforcement), 143 (1976) (disclosure of specific operations or specialized equipment directly related to investigation or detection of crime may be excepted). Section 552.108(b)(1) is not applicable, however, to generally known policies and procedures. *See, e.g.*, ORDs 531 at 2-3 (Penal Code provisions, common law rules, and constitutional limitations on use of force not protected), 252 at 3 (governmental body failed to indicate why investigative procedures and techniques requested were any different from those commonly known).

You assert release of the firearm serial numbers in the remaining information would interfere with law enforcement because they could be used on illegal firearms or in a missing weapons report. Upon review, we agree release of the information at issue would interfere with law enforcement. Accordingly, the sheriff's office may withhold the firearm serial numbers you marked under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code.

Section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure the current and former home addresses and telephone numbers, emergency contact information, social security number, and family member information of a peace officer, regardless of whether the peace officer made an election under section 552.024 or section 552.1175 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(2). Section 552.117(a)(2) applies to peace officers as defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. We note section 552.117 encompasses a personal cellular telephone number, provided a

governmental body does not pay for the cellular telephone service. *See* Open Records Decision No. 506 at 5-6 (1988) (section 552.117 not applicable to cellular telephone numbers paid for by governmental body and intended for official use). Accordingly, with the exception of the information we marked for release, the sheriff's office must withhold the information you marked and the additional information we marked to withhold under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code; however, the marked cellular telephone number may be withheld only if a governmental body does not pay for the cellular telephone service.⁷ However, we conclude section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code is not applicable to the remaining information, and the sheriff's office may not withhold it on that ground.

Section 552.1175 of the Government Code provides, in relevant part, as follows:

(a) This section applies only to:

(1) peace officers as defined by Article 2.12, Code of Criminal Procedure[.]

(b) Information that relates to the home address, home telephone number, emergency contact information, date of birth, or social security number of individual to whom this section applies, or that reveals whether the individual has family members is confidential and may not be disclosed to the public under this chapter if the individual to whom the information relates:

(1) chooses to restrict public access to the information;

(2) notifies the governmental body of the individual's choice on a form provided by the governmental body, accompanied by evidence of the individual's status.

Gov't Code § 552.1175(a)(1), (b). Section 552.1175 also encompasses a personal cellular telephone number, unless the cellular telephone service is paid for by a governmental body. *See* ORD 506 at 5-6. Some of the remaining information relates to individuals who may be licensed peace officers, but the information is not held in an employment context. However, we are unable to determine from the information provided which, if any, of the individuals at issue are currently licensed peace officers. Thus, we must rule conditionally. Accordingly, to the extent the information at issue relates to individuals who are currently licensed peace officers and who elect to restrict access to the information in accordance with section 552.1175(b), the sheriff's office must withhold the information you marked under section 552.1175 of the Government Code; however, the sheriff's office may only withhold the marked cellular telephone numbers if the cellular telephone services are not paid for by a governmental body. Conversely, if the individuals whose information is at issue are not currently licensed peace officers or do not elect to restrict access to the

⁷ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

information in accordance with section 552.1175(b), the marked information may not be withheld under section 552.1175.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title or registration, or a personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or county is excepted from public release. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130(a). Accordingly, the sheriff's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information you marked and the additional information we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Section 552.136 of the Government Code provides, "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential." *Id.* § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining "access device"). This office has determined insurance policy numbers are access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136. *See* Open Records Decision No. 684 at 9 (2009). Accordingly, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code. However, none of the remaining information consists of access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136 and the sheriff's office may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

Section 552.137 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "an e-mail address of a member of the public that is provided for the purpose of communicating electronically with a governmental body" unless the member of the public consents to its release or the e-mail address is of a type specifically excluded by subsection (c). *See* Gov't Code § 552.137(a)-(c). The e-mail addresses at issue are not excluded by subsection (c). Therefore, the sheriff's office must withhold the personal e-mail addresses you marked under section 552.137 of the Government Code, unless the owners affirmatively consent to their public disclosure.

In summary, the TCOLE identification number is not subject to the Act and need not be released to the requestor. The sheriff's office must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and federal law. The sheriff's office must withhold the information at issue, which we marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code. The sheriff's office must withhold the submitted L-2 form under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 1701.306 of the Occupations Code. The sheriff's office must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 1703.306 of the Occupations Code. The sheriff's office must withhold the driver identification numbers, names, addresses but not zip codes, and medical or disability information of the individuals in the information the sheriff's office received from DPS under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with sections 730.004 and 730.013 of the Transportation Code. The sheriff's office must withhold the employee's date of birth under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code. With the exception of the information we marked for release, the sheriff's office must withhold all identifiable public citizens' dates of birth, the information you marked, and the information we marked to

withhold under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The sheriff's office may withhold the firearm serial numbers you marked under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code. With the exception of the information we marked for release, the sheriff's office must withhold the information you marked and the additional information we marked to withhold under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code; however, the marked cellular telephone number may be withheld only if a governmental body does not pay for the cellular telephone service. To the extent the information at issue relates to individuals who are currently licensed peace officers and who elect to restrict access to the information in accordance with section 552.1175(b) of the Government Code, the sheriff's office must withhold the information you marked under section 552.1175 of the Government Code; however, the sheriff's office may only withhold the marked cellular telephone numbers at issue if the cellular telephone services are not paid for by a governmental body. The sheriff's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information you marked and the additional information we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The sheriff's office must withhold the information we marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The sheriff's office must withhold the personal e-mail addresses you marked under section 552.137 of the Government Code, unless the owners affirmatively consent to their public disclosure. The sheriff's office must release the remaining information.

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
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DS/mo

Ref: ID# 853978

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)