March 3, 2022

Ms. Nelly R. Herrera  
Vice Chancellor and General Counsel  
The Texas State University System  
601 Colorado Street  
Austin, Texas 78701-2904

Dear Ms. Herrera:

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# 933851 (SHSU File No. 21-0457).

Sam Houston State University (the “university”) received a request for information pertaining to a specified case number. The university states it has released some information to the requestor. The university states it will redact motor vehicle record information pursuant to section 552.130(c) of the Government Code, access device numbers pursuant to section 552.136(c) of the Government Code, and social security numbers pursuant to section 552.147(b) of the Government Code.¹ The university also states it will redact certain information pursuant to Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).² The university claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure

¹ Section 552.130(c) of the Government Code allows a governmental body to redact the information described in section 552.130(a) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. See Gov’t Code § 552.130(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.130(e). See id. § 552.130(d), (e). Section 552.136(c) of the Government Code allows a governmental body to redact the information described in section 552.136(b) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. See id. § 552.136(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.136(e). See id. § 552.136(d), (e). Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person’s social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. See id. § 552.147(b).

² Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold certain categories of information, including personal e-mail addresses under section 552.137 of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision. See ORD 684.
under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. Additionally, the university states, and provide documentation showing, it notified the Walker County District Attorney’s Office of its right to submit comments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released.\(^3\) See Gov’t Code § 552.304 (interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released). We have considered the exceptions the university claims and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.\(^4\)

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). The university states its police department is a law enforcement agency established pursuant to section 51.203 of the Education Code. The university also states the submitted information pertains to an active criminal investigation or prosecution. Based on the university’s 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 section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information.

However, we note, and the university acknowledges, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in Houston Chronicle. See 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). We note basic information does not include public citizens’ dates of birth, motor vehicle record information encompassed by section 552.130 of the Government Code, access device numbers encompassed by section 552.136 of the Government Code, e-mail addresses subject to section 552.137 of the Government Code, or social security numbers of individuals other than an arrestee.\(^5\) See ORD 127 at 3-4. We also note basic information

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\(^3\) As of the date of this letter, this office has not received comments from the third party at issue explaining why any of the submitted information should not be released.

\(^4\) We assume that 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 that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

\(^5\) Although basic information includes an arrestee’s social security number, section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person’s social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act. Gov’t Code § 552.147(b).
does not include the identities of any witnesses or victims unless a victim is also the complainant. Thus, with the exception of the basic information, which the university states it has released, the university may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Finally, the university asks this office to issue a previous determination that would permit it to withhold public citizens’ dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy without the necessity of requesting a decision form this office. We decline to issue such a previous determination at this time. Additionally, the university asks us to issue a previous determination permitting it to withhold information subject to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of requesting an attorney general opinion. See Gov’t Code § 552.301(a) (allowing governmental body to withhold information subject to previous determination); Houston Chronicle v. Mattox, 767 S.W.2d 695, 698 (Tex. 1989) (acknowledging this office has authority under section 552.301 of the Government Code to decide what constitutes a previous determination); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (describing the two types of previous determinations). We note section 552.011 of the Government Code states “[t]he attorney general shall maintain uniformity in the application, operation, and interpretation” of the Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Gov’t Code § 552.011. Pursuant to this legislative mandate, section 552.011 grants the attorney general the authority to “prepare, distribute, and publish any materials, including detailed and comprehensive written decisions and opinions, that relate to or are based on” the Act. Id. We further note the Act requires governmental bodies to promptly release public information requested under the Act within a reasonable time, without delay. Id. § 552.221(a); Open Records Decision No. 664 at 5 (2000).

With the foregoing in mind and upon due consideration, we issue this ruling, which constitutes a previous determination allowing the university to withhold certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of first requesting an attorney general decision, so long as the university has not previously received a request for the information from the same requestor in the manner described below. See ORD 673. This decision is intended to encourage the prompt release of requested public information by increasing the efficiency of the review process under the Act by clearly identifying information the university may withhold under the circumstances delineated below. See Gov’t Code §§ 552.011, .221; Open Records Decision Nos. 684 (2009), 673.

Accordingly, the university may withhold certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of first requesting a ruling from this office in the following circumstances:

1. the university makes a good faith determination that the information at issue relates to the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime, and the release of the information would interfere with the

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6 As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the university’s remaining arguments against disclosure of the submitted information.
detection, investigation, or prosecution of an open or pending criminal matter;

2. the university will release at least the basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime (the “releasable information”) from the requested information;

3. the university will produce the releasable information to the requestor pursuant to the requirements of the Act within five business days after the date the request for information was received;

4. the university will provide the requestor with the notice included in Appendix A of this ruling when the university responds to the request pursuant to the requirements of this previous determination; and

5. the university has not previously received a request for the same information from the same requestor after the university has provided the requestor with the releasable information.

See Gov’t Code § 552.011. If any of the above circumstances change—or any other law, facts, or circumstances involving the requestor or the status of the requested information changes—the university may not rely upon this ruling as a previous determination to withhold the information at issue. See ORD 673 at 7. Additionally, the university may not rely on this previous determination in response to requests in which basic information is not responsive. For example, no basic information is at issue in a request for only a dashboard camera video recording or 9-1-1 call audio recording. Thus, the university may not rely upon this previous determination in response to those types of requests. Furthermore, this previous determination does not apply to situations in which other law may require some or all of the information at issue to be disclosed. See, e.g., Crim. Proc. Code arts. 2.1396 (detailing right of access to videos made in connection with various types of driving while intoxicated offenses), 2.29 (detailing right of access to written report to law enforcement agency of alleged violation of Penal Code section 32.51); Gov’t Code §§ 411.081–1.410 (detailing rights of access to criminal history record information), 560.002(1)(A) (detailing rights of access to fingerprints and other biometric identifiers); Transp. Code §§ 550.065 (detailing rights of access to crash report forms), 724.018 (detailing right of access to blood or breath specimen analysis results). We also note this previous determination does not permit the disclosure of basic information in those instances in which the entirety of the information at issue must be withheld. See, e.g., Fam. Code §§ 58.008 (detailing circumstances under which certain information related to juvenile offenders must be withheld in its entirety), 261.201 (detailing circumstances under which certain information related to investigations of child abuse or neglect must be withheld in its entirety); Open Records Decision No. 393 (1983) (stating, because the identifying information of a sexual assault victim was inextricably intertwined with other releasable information, the county attorney’s office was required to withhold the information in its entirety). We further note this previous determination does not permit
the university to withhold citations; DIC-24 statutory warnings; DIC-25 notices of suspension; criminal trespass warnings; notices of code violations; triplicate forms; or information subject to section 552.007 or section 552.022 of the Government Code, other than information subject to section 552.022(a)(1).  See Gov’t Code §§ 552.007, .022(a)(1)-(18), .108(a)(1).  However, the use of this previous determination does not preclude the university from withholding information pursuant to other statutory authority or previous determinations that apply to the university.  See, e.g., id. §§ 552.1175(f), .130(c), .136(c), .147(b); ORD 684.

If the university’s use of this previous determination does not fall within all of the circumstances delineated above, the requirements of the Act apply, including section 552.301 of the Government Code, and deadlines under the Act run from the date the university received the initial written request for information.  See Gov’t Code § 552.301(a); Mattox, 767 S.W.2d at 698.  Consequently, misapplication of this previous determination may result in the presumption the requested information is public.  See Gov’t Code § 552.302.  Thus, if the university is unsure as to the applicability of this previous determination to information responsive to a request for information, the university should request a ruling from this office.  Additionally, this office may modify or withdraw this previous determination for any reason, including, but not limited to, misapplication of this previous determination.  See id. § 552.011; Mattox, 767 S.W.2d at 698; see also Open Records Decision Nos. 485 at 3 (1987), 673 at 5.  Finally, if the university later requests a ruling from this office in response to a second request for the same information from the same requestor, the university should notify this office it relied upon this previous determination in its response to the initial request.

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,

Gerald Arismendez
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

GAA/be

Ref:  ID# 933851

Enc.  Submitted documents

c:  Requestor
    (w/o enclosures)
Appendix A

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Dear M:

**NOTICE:**

On [date], we received your public information request for [description of information requested], dated [date request received] (the “request”). In order to promote governmental efficiency and encourage the prompt release of information, as required by the Public Information Act, we have relied upon Open Records Letter No. 2022-#### (2022) in responding to your request. We do so within five business days of your request.

The university has made a good faith determination the information you requested:

- deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime and the release of the records would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of an open or pending criminal matter.

This information is subject to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The university has also determined you have not previously requested this information. Therefore, pursuant to the previous determination granted by the Office of the Attorney General in Open Records Letter No. 2022-####, the university is releasing some information to you, and is withholding the remaining responsive information subject to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Please note, we are withholding the following specified types of information:

- Incident report (except basic information)
- Witness/suspect interview(s)
- Video recording(s)
- Audio recording(s)
- Other (specify documents withheld):

If you have questions regarding the use of this previous determination, please call the university at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or for more information concerning your rights and the responsibilities of the university, please visit the Office of the Attorney General’s website at https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/108-previous-determination, or call the Office of the Attorney General’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. You may also review general information about the Public

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7 If you request this information a second time, the university must request a ruling from the Office of the Attorney General (the “OAG”) in order to withhold the information. See Open Records Letter No. 2022-####.
Information Act, including the types of information included in basic information, in the 2020 Public Information Handbook at http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government.