



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 14, 2022

Ms. Tiffany Bangs
Assistant County Attorney
Harris County
1019 Congress, 15th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2022-35400

Dear Ms. Bangs:

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# 984592 (ORR# 22PIA0956).

The Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct 4 (the "constable's office"), received a request for all calls involving a named individual at a specified address during a specified time period. The constable's office claims the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the constable's office claims.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision."¹ Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or 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). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. This office has found a compilation of an individual's criminal history is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. United States Dep't of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (when considering prong regarding individual's privacy interest, court recognized distinction between public records found in

¹ The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of information and noted that individual has significant privacy interest in compilation of one's criminal history). Furthermore, we find a compilation of a private citizen's criminal history is generally not of legitimate concern to the public.

The present request seeks all reports pertaining to a named individual. This request requires the constable's office to compile the named individual's criminal history and implicates the named individual's right to privacy. Therefore, to the extent the constable's office maintains law enforcement records listing the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the constable's office must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

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,

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/pt

Ref: ID# 984592

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)