OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

February 24, 2003

Mr. Duncan R. Fox
Deputy General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P. O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2003-1169

Dear Mr. Fox:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 176980.

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to the requestor's alleged condition which may affect her ability to safely operate a motor vehicle on streets and highways. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision. *See* Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information that is protected from disclosure by other statutes. Section 12.095 of the Health and Safety Code allows the department to request an opinion or recommendation from the medical advisory board of the Department of Health as to the ability of an applicant or license holder to operate a motor vehicle safely. *See* Health & Safety Code § 12.095. Further, section 12.097 provides:

> (a) All records, reports, and testimony relating to the medical condition of an applicant or license holder:
>
> > (1) are for the confidential use of the medical advisory board, a panel, or the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas;

> (2) are privileged information; and
>
> (3) may not be disclosed to any person or used as evidence in a trial except as provided by Subsection (b).

Health & Safety Code § 12.097. As the submitted information is a record or report relating to the medical condition of an applicant or license holder, the department must withhold it pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 12.097 of the Health and Safety Code.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

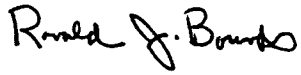
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Ronald J. Bounds
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RJB/lmt

Ref: ID# 176980

Enc. Submitted document

c: Ms. Dolores R. Muhich
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(w/o enclosures)