



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

August 5, 2004

Mr. Steve Aragón  
Chief Counsel  
Texas Health and Human Services Commission  
P.O. Box 13247  
Austin, Texas 78711

OR2004-6606

Dear Mr. Aragón:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 209589.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (the "commission") received two requests for the following information concerning the CHIP Exclusive Provider Organization request for proposal: 1) the score sheets; 2) proposals; 3) original and revised RFPs; and 4) the estimated contract value, award date, expiration date, and contract number. The commission has released item 3 and states it has no information responsive to item 4. The commission asserts items 1 and 2 are excepted from disclosure based on section 552.104 of the Government Code.

Section 552.104 states that information is excepted from required public disclosure if release of the information would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. The purpose of this exception is to protect the interests of a governmental body usually in competitive bidding situations. *See* Open Records Decision No. 592 (1991). This exception protects information from public disclosure if the governmental body demonstrates potential harm to its interests in a particular competitive situation. *See* Open Records Decision No. 463 (1987). Generally, section 552.104 does not except bids from public disclosure after bidding is completed and the contract has been executed. *See* Open Records Decision 541 (1990).

The commission states that it has announced the tentative award of the contract to the Bankers Reserve Insurance Company of Wisconsin, but the contract has not been executed. The commission further explains that if negotiations break down, release of the information

would jeopardize its bargaining position if it were to enter into negotiations with another bidder. We therefore conclude that the information is excepted from disclosure based on section 552.104 until such time as the contract is executed. In light of our conclusion under section 552.104, we need not address the third parties' arguments.

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).

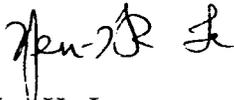
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following 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,



Yen-Ha Le  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

YHL/sdk

Ref: ID# 209589

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Kimberly Reeves  
Quorum Report  
10455 North Central Expressway #109-196  
Dallas, Texas 75231  
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Erik Holmgren  
INPUT, Inc.  
11951 Freedom Drive, Suite 1000  
Reston, Virginia 20190  
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Suzanne F. Spradley  
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP  
300 West 6th Street, Suite 2100  
Austin, Texas 78701-2916  
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Robert B. Vlanch  
Vice President & General Counsel  
The MEGA Life and Health Insurance Company  
2301 West Plano Parkway, Suite 300  
Plano, Texas 75075  
(w/o enclosures)