ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 7, 2008

Mr. Philip A. DeFriend
Assistant General Counsel
TDCJ- Office of the General Counsel
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2008-09123

Dear Mr. DeFriend:

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# 315021.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for information retained in a specified inmate's file. You state that some of the responsive information has been or will be released to the requestor. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 and 552.134 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.134 of the Government Code relates to inmates of the department. This exception provides in relevant part:

> (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) or by Section 552.029 [of the Government Code], information obtained or maintained by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department.

Gov't Code § 552.134(a). You state that the submitted information is related to the named inmate and several other inmates confined in a facility operated by the department. Based upon your representations and our review of the submitted documents, we conclude that

section 552.134 is applicable to the submitted information. We also find that none of the submitted information is subject to release under section 552.029 of the Government Code. Therefore, the department must withhold the submitted information under section 552.134 of the Government Code.[1]

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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3). If the governmental body does not file suit over 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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 challenge 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 Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

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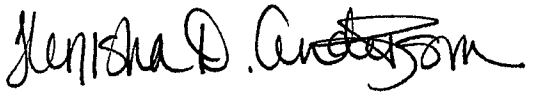
[1]As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the department's remaining argument against disclosure.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. 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,



Henisha D. Anderson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

HDA/mcf

Ref: ID# 315021

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Monte L. Swearengen
Gray & Becker
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Austin, Texas 78701-2228
(w/o enclosures)