



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

27th October 2020

New Contract,

RE: THE TRADE BILL.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the *Trade Bill*; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I agree with you about the importance of effective parliamentary scrutiny, but I do not believe that the provisions in the proposed New Clause 4 are necessary.

It is important to bear in mind that at its core, the *Trade Bill* is a continuity piece of legislation. It cannot be used to implement new free trade agreements. Instead, it can only be used to transition the free trade agreements that the UK has been party to through our former EU membership.

Regarding future trade agreements, Ministers have published their negotiating objectives prior to the start of trade talks and held open briefings for MPs and Peers. Regular updates are provided to Parliament on the progress of negotiations too and my ministerial colleagues at the Department for International Trade will be engaging closely with Parliament's Select Committees as negotiations progress. The Government has also made repeatedly clear that where necessary, it will bring forward primary legislation to implement new free trade agreements, to be debated and scrutinised by Parliament in the usual way.

Like you, I cherish our National Health Service and its guiding principles: that it is universal and free at the point of need. The Government has been repeatedly clear that our NHS will never be on the table in any trade agreements - a position I fully support.

Free trade is a driver of economic growth which can raise incomes, create jobs, and lift people out of poverty, which is why I am glad that outside of the EU, the UK will be able to strike new trade agreements with countries across the globe. But more trade should not come at the expense of the high levels of quality and protection enjoyed in our country - and it won't.

The UK will continue to ensure that the NHS is protected in all trade agreements it is party to, whether transitioned from an EU context, or as a result of new negotiations. Indeed, outside of the EU, rigorous protections for our NHS will be maintained and included in any future trade agreement to which our country is party. I want to be particularly clear here that the NHS will be protected in any future trade agreement with the US. The price the NHS pays for drugs will not be on the table either, and nor will the services the NHS provides.



With specific regard to investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms in trade agreements, I understand the Government has been thinking carefully about its future approach. However, it is important to note that ISDS does not, and cannot, force the privatisation of public services or oblige the Government to open the NHS to further competition. There is also yet to be a successful ISDS claim against the UK and nor has the threat of potential disputes affected the Government's legislative programme.

I hope this reassures you that all future trade agreements will continue to protect our vital NHS and that parliamentary scrutiny will be extensive in the process.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**