



June 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the NHS in future trade agreements and the Trade Bill.

I appreciate your concerns regarding standards in future trade agreements, the scrutiny of such agreements, and investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms. However, I would like to assure you that such concerns are unfounded.

One of the most extensive consultation exercises in recent times was held on trade negotiations with the US, Australia, New Zealand and potential UK accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. This has helped to ensure that the public gets the chance to have their say on these future trade agreements.

The right of governments to regulate in the public interest is protected in investment chapters in free trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties. The UK has more than 90 bilateral investment treaties in place with other countries, and there has never been a successful ISDS claim brought against the UK, nor has the threat of potential claims affected the Government's legislative programme. I would like to reassure you that ISDS does not, and cannot, force the privatisation of public services.

The Government has been repeatedly clear that our NHS will never be on the table in any trade agreements, a position I fully support. 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.

Although I was unable to attend the debate on the 20th May as the Speakers Office did not select my question, I have contacted the Secretary of State for International Trade Liz Truss regarding the concerns you have highlighted. She stated that her *'team of negotiators will drive a hard bargain for all British industries and people. We are committed to our red lines – the NHS, the price it pays for drugs and its services are not for sale. There will be no compromise on high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards. It is in the interests of both the UK and the US to reach an agreement, but we will walk away from the negotiating table if the right deal is not on offer'*.

I have been personally assured that the Government is committed to transparency and will ensure that parliamentarians, UK citizens and businesses have access to the information they need on our trade negotiations.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me. Please stay safe and well over the coming months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Sunderland', is displayed on a light yellow rectangular background.

James Sunderland MP

Member of Parliament for the Bracknell Constituency

Bracknell, Crowthorne, Finchampstead, Sandhurst and Wokingham Without