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Department for
International Trade

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Our ref: MCSL2019/00992
Your ref. JS6394

Dear Jo,

25th March 2019

Thank you for your email 1st March conveying concerns of your constituents regarding future trade negotiations and the National Health Service.

As you may be aware, I introduced a debate on Future Free Trade Agreements in the House of Commons on 21st February. If they have not done so already, I would invite your constituents to read the Hansard report of the debate on the Parliament website (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-21>).

During the debate, I said that nothing in future agreements will stop the Government being able to regulate our public services, including the NHS. In fact, the Government has been consistently clear that we are committed to the fundamental principles of the NHS, that it is universal and free at the point of need. The Government's policy will continue to be that decisions about public services, including the NHS, will always remain for the UK Governments, including the Devolved Administrations, and not our trade partners.

EU Free Trade Agreements contain specific wording to safeguard public services, such as in CETA. These reservations have enabled the UK to ensure that trade agreements we are party to as EU members do not threaten our vital public services, including the NHS. As we leave the EU, the UK will continue to ensure that rigorous protections for the NHS are included in all trade agreements it is party to.

I hope this reply is helpful and of reassurance to your constituents.

Yours sincerely,

THE RT HON DR LIAM FOX MP
Secretary of State, Department for International Trade
& President of the Board of Trade