

10th December 2015

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the EU – US Free Trade Agreement, which is also known as TTIP. I would like to clarify some matters relating to the agreement, which will hopefully demonstrate that it does not carry the risks that some have put forward.

Underlying the agreement is the opportunity to add £10 billion to our economy every year. That equates to almost £400 per household, which means more jobs, more choice and reduced prices.

UK governments alone decide how public services, including the NHS, are run. This agreement does not change this and does not change UK laws or lower consumer, labour or environmental standards. This agreement is about helping our consumers and our businesses access new markets. Where mutually high standards can be recognised with the US, they will be. But where this is not possible, US businesses will have to raise their standards to meet ours, not the other way around.

There have been claims that investors could sue a government for losses and win if a government takes a decision in the wider public interest, whether on health, the environment or consumer safety. However, this could not happen. It is important that businesses investing abroad are protected from discrimination and unfair treatment, but there is nothing to allow companies to undermine public policymaking. Extensive consultation has taken place and all provisions are being looked at carefully.

EU law actually provides special protections for national governments to run health services (and other public services) however they wish and any EU-wide trade agreement would have to comply with these protections.

More documents relating to negotiations will be made available to MPs as the process continues and a wealth of material has been published on the European Commission's website. Parliament has also had a number of opportunities to debate this agreement, will scrutinise the final agreement and ultimately has the final veto power.

Having lived and worked in Scandinavia and Germany myself, and seen the way these nations value their own health services, I would expect that we would not be alone in rejecting the trade deal if it threatened health services.

Thank you again for contacting me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP