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Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the amendment on Parliamentary scrutiny made to the Trade Bill in the House of Lords.

I agree that Parliament should be able to scrutinise trade policy and free trade agreements. It has an important role in debating and scrutinising the Government's domestic and foreign policies.

That is why I am glad that the Government has made a number of important steps in enhancing Parliamentary scrutiny of trade policy. This includes sharing extensive and comprehensive information with Parliament ahead of negotiations with the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

Public consultations have and will continue to be held prior to negotiations to inform the Government's approach. Ministers have also 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 and I know that my Ministerial colleagues at the Department for International Trade will also be engaging closely with the International Trade Committee and the Lords International Agreements Committee as negotiations progress.

The Government has told MPs that it is committed to a transparent trade policy with comprehensive engagement with Parliament. I understand there are concerns about the NHS, human rights, food, animal welfare and the environment. I can assure you the UK will seek to maintain the highest standards in the future and that the NHS will never be on the table in trade negotiations. Under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, Parliament can also effectively veto trade agreements by resolving against ratification of a treaty indefinitely.

While I could not support the amendment for the reasons mentioned above, please rest assured that I will press Ministers to ensure that Parliamentarians can scrutinise new trade policy in detail in the future.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY