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Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
Secretary of State
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET



CC: Olu Fasan, Policy Officer, Infrastructure & Materials, Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

27th March 2020

KEEPING BRITAIN CLEAN, SAFE AND WORKING – HOW WE CAN HELP

Dear Secretary of State,

I write on behalf of BOSS, the British Office Supplies and Services Federation. Our industry manufactures and supplies business across the UK with a huge range of products, grouped into categories that include PPE, Cleaning and Hygiene, Facilities, Furniture, Technology, Stationery and Consumables, many of which have been identified as critical by the government during this crisis. Our sector is worth £10 billion to the UK economy, and this letter is backed by 700 companies (attached document) with a combined turnover of £2.9 billion.

We supply all areas of industry as well as the NHS, schools, care homes and research centres. We also supply Government departments including the MoD, DoJ, the Home Office and HM Treasury. Our members are very focused on ensuring these businesses and departments can continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the announcement of the lockdown on Monday and the mass movement of businesses to home working, it has further become clear that deliveries of essential supplies to homes and businesses are paramount to ensure the UK remains as productive as possible. Our sector has a highly engineered distribution network that excels in delivering products and services with a 24 hour turnaround as standard.

As we have a supply chain that can a) move goods efficiently and b) that is already prioritising delivery to critical businesses, my reasons for writing to you are threefold:

1. If businesses in our sector are considered 'non-essential', distribution will grind to a halt and business failure will take place across the whole supply chain. Our warehouses and factories have already sent home all employees who are able to work from home and are highly familiar with the implementation of strict H&S precautions which they have adapted to new COVID-19 regulations. We ask for assurances that these businesses will be able to continue to operate and our workforce, where strictly necessary, be treated as key workers.
2. In observing the situation in Europe we anticipate that certain products and services may be prioritised. We ask that the distribution of business critical supplies are prioritised to ensure that our sector can continue to deliver essential PPE/cleaning facilities to critical businesses and that the UK workforce can continue to be productive while working from home.
3. We have a highly effective supply chain which we anticipate will have capacity over the coming months; can we support Government further in its battle against COVID-19? We would be very happy to discuss how we might be able to facilitate this.

I would welcome a call with your Department to discuss these issues and I hope we will be able to help each other at this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Drakeford', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Simon Drakeford
Chairman, BOSS Federation
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