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European Union Committee

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25 November 2020

Edward Argar MP
Minister for Health
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0EU

Dear Edward,

Supply of pharmaceuticals to Northern Ireland

Thank you for your letter dated 10 November regarding our concerns about the risk to the supply of prescription medicines in Northern Ireland (NI) from 1 January next year.

We were particularly pleased to hear that you have agreed a one year grace period with the European Commission, which relieves the immediate pressure and will allow businesses more time to prepare for any changes. We know that this will be a great help to the industry and remove risks regarding the supply of prescription medicines to NI consumers from 1 January.

You noted in your letter that you are working in the Joint Committee to resolve outstanding issues about how this will work in practice during 2021, and that further guidance would follow. When will that guidance be available?

In addition, while we welcome this development, it delays rather than fixes the issue. The industry needs clarity on what rules will apply to the supply of pharmaceuticals to NI, now from 2022. In light of the time required for businesses to make the necessary changes, they need clarity in the next few months about the arrangements for 2022 onwards. Please set out what concrete steps you are taking to establish what rules will apply from 2022, and when guidance on this will be available.

We look forward to a response within ten working days.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Teverson
Chair of the European Union Environment Sub-Committee