

The Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
Chair, Business and Trade Committee
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30 October 2024

Dear Liam,

This Government wants to preserve the UK's status as a global leader in product regulation, supporting businesses and protecting consumers. We want to ensure the UK is better placed to address modern day safety issues, harness opportunities that deliver economic growth, and ensure a level playing field between the high street and online marketplaces. As we embrace the opportunities of the digital age, it is clear the products we buy and the way in which we buy them are changing.

As a result, rules and regulations that keep people safe need to be updated to reflect those evolving challenges. The previous Government undertook a Call for Evidence in 2021, followed by a public Consultation last year, on how the product safety framework needed to change to better respond to these challenges. From the regulation of online marketplaces to the way we protect people from new and emerging risks, it was clear from the responses that new powers were needed to ensure the framework was fit for the digital age and beyond. That is why the Government has decided to bring forward legislation very early in this Parliament to ensure we can make changes to the framework as soon as we can.

The Product Regulation and Metrology Bill, introduced in Parliament on 4 September, is vital to ensuring that the UK's product safety and metrology frameworks keep pace with the exciting technological advances and rapidly evolving business models of the 21st century. It will underpin the UK's position at the forefront of international trade and enable the recognition of EU product requirements where this is in the UK's best interests, as well as protecting citizens from new and emerging hazards.

From aerosols and machinery to toys and electrical equipment, the safety of products within the scope of the Bill is essential to every person in the country. At least 300,000 UK businesses, with a market turnover of almost £490 billion, are affected by these regulations.

In addition, metrology legislation applies to a substantial part of consumer expenditure, with billions spent annually by UK consumers on goods sold by weight and measure.

Innovation, free trade and vibrant product markets are fundamental to our mission to kick-start economic growth, but our current product safety and metrology regulations have started to fall behind the cutting-edge. As the responses to last year's Consultation showed, it is now essential to update our framework and future-proof it to meet the challenges ahead. Product safety failures can have devastating consequences, and we are determined that our regulatory framework is agile and flexible in its response both to new threats and complex modern supply chains. The powers created by the Bill will do just that – enabling the creation of a regulatory environment that fosters innovation and growth without compromising on safety.

The Bill will allow us to tackle the sale of dangerous and non-compliant products via online marketplaces. While the growth of ecommerce has provided consumers with greater choice and convenience, this cannot be at the expense of consumer safety. By putting in place appropriate responsibilities throughout the supply chain, we will level the playing field between high street retailers and online marketplaces so consumers can buy with confidence and businesses compete fairly.

Given the powers in this Bill build on many years of consultation, we believe it is helpful to share a summary of responses to the 2023 consultation. This is presented alongside some of the broader context on the development of the product safety and metrology frameworks to support debate and scrutiny of this legislation.

The Bill will give us the powers we need to make essential changes to the legal framework. Government will continue to work with businesses, consumer groups and other experts to ensure that the regulations that are brought forward in the future are evidence-based, protect people, support innovation and boost growth.

We are sharing this letter with those Peers who spoke in the debate at Second Reading and members of both the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee and the Constitution Committee in the House of Lords. Given interest from Parliamentarians in both Houses, we are sharing with members of the Business and Trade Committee in the House of Commons and will also place a copy in the libraries of both Houses.

Yours ever,



JUSTIN MADDERS MP

Minister for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets
Department for Business and Trade



LORD LEONG CBE

Lord in Waiting (Government Whip)