



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

**LONDON SW1A 0AA**

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

9<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

**Access to Grants for Business During Covid-19**

I would like to thank you for the work of you and your department in support of my constituent businesses during these unprecedented times. I know that the government is doing all it can to support British Business and the support it has offered so far has been well received, however that does not mean that there are not teething problems.

My primary concern is that businesses in my constituency of the Cities of London and Westminster are suffering a disproportionately heavy blow from the £51,000 rateable value threshold for cash grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses and that their vital support networks are not able to benefit from the relief.

Simply put, the threshold is too low for Central London. It does not cover enough businesses in my constituency of equivalent size and operation compared to the rest of the country.

Here, business owners pay the highest land and property costs nationally yet operate at immensely competitive price points whilst, in good times, contributing the most to the Exchequer of any constituency.

I am informed by UK Hospitality, covering the Hotel, Restaurant and Bars sector, that they believe that 78% of their businesses in the constituency are unable to access the grants. Representatives of the Theatre industry in London are concerned that whilst physical theatres may be able to access the support, the wider industry network of production offices, technical resourcing, ticketing offices and vital supporting companies are not.

One of my constituent businesses, which would be hard-pressed to describe as a large business, is a hair salon in Westminster with a rateable value of £54,000. Their

success has been brutally met with a -£25,000 cliff edge because they find themselves £3,000 above the threshold for a retail grant.

The government has met the needs of the worst off with miracle-like speed and should be praised for their globally leading efforts. However, there remains room for improvement.

Going from £0 to a £25,000 grant for breathing over a threshold is arbitrary and unfair.

I would ask that you reconsider an option to make the grant system more flexible, potentially introducing more tapered support over the current threshold, as well as broadening the criteria for inclusion to cover those crucial support industries to the leisure sector.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and work with you to develop a more proportionate system.

Yours sincerely,



Nickie Aiken MP  
Cities of London and Westminster

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**Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**

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**Cllr Rachael Robathan, Leader – Westminster City Council**