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Mr Ken Skates AM
Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

24th April 2020

Dear Mr Skates,

Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sectors need your support - #RaiseTheBar

I am writing on behalf of FOR Cardiff, the Business Improvement District (BID) to ask for your support for the #RaiseTheBar campaign being run by the UK-wide BID Foundation

These are unprecedented times for our economy at a local, regional and national level. It is only right that whilst Wales deals with the Coronavirus pandemic, businesses play their part in closing their doors to ensure people stay safe. We, of course, welcome the UK Government's response to the crisis with a series of financial interventions that include the series of business grants and the job retention scheme.

We appreciate, understand and respect that Welsh Government cannot provide the solution to every challenge. However, the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors are pivotal to any economy across the world, but particularly to Wales' capital city, Cardiff, and they need greater support.

The retail, hospitality and leisure sector is vital and must be protected at all costs. The UK retail industry alone generated £394 billion worth of sales in 2019 and accounts for 131,500 Welsh retail workers. The Welsh tourism & leisure sector has reached expenditure of £4 billion. The Welsh food and drink industry employs over 229,500 people and has a turnover of 22.1 billion. This evidences the vast values these industries bring to the Welsh economy.

At a time when businesses are doing all they can to support the greater cause, we are campaigning for central government to reconsider and amend the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant (RHLG) by expanding the rateable value threshold for all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses from £51,000 to any business with a rateable value up to and including £150,000, allowing further businesses the opportunity to access the £25,000 grant.

In FOR Cardiff bid area alone, a significant proportion of our retail, hospitality and leisure member businesses have a rateable value above £51,000, with over 250 having no access to the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant. Though we acknowledge the difficulty in setting a threshold, we believe strongly that the threshold of £51,000 is too low to provide adequate support to these businesses in their time of need.

Whether these businesses are independent or operating from more than one location, we forget businesses of all sizes with a rateable value of over £51,000 at our peril. Our feedback from them suggests that they are carrying significant stock losses and are still facing immediate cashflow challenges that wage subsidies will not address. Many have told us they are not in a position to take on further debt or have serious misgivings about being able to survive the recovery period and service loans.

These are some of our most adaptable businesses and the economy will need them to stave off the threat of cessation, so that they can play their role in rejuvenating the Welsh economy and contributing to community wellbeing.

We acknowledge that by increasing the RHLG threshold up to and including £150,000 will increase the burden on Welsh Government. This is a price we believe is worth paying to ensure these businesses are supported to become part of the greater push to mobilise Cardiff's economy, rather than leaving premises empty, growing unemployment and a depleted city centre.

It is obvious that even with an expansion of the cap, that not all businesses will benefit. What we believe to be important is that the grant scheme is reasonably extended as critically, this will help hundreds of businesses in Cardiff adapt to the challenges ahead. We also ask the Welsh Government to look urgently at how irreplaceable night-time venues, with a rateable value above £150,000, can be protected.

Our campaign is supported by many industry leaders such as Chief Executives from UK Hospitality, Association of Convenience Stores and Music Venues Trust as well as businesses and if successful will, for most, offer the single biggest difference in their personal commercial fight against this crisis.

We would be grateful of your support for the #RaiseTheBar campaign and any lobbying you could do. More information is available at www.raisethebarcampaign.co.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adrian Field', with a long, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Adrian Field
Executive Director
FOR Cardiff

cc: Jo Stevens MP, Jenny Rathbone AM, Cllr Huw Thomas