

MATTHEW OFFORD MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

**Coronavirus Epidemic: increase in prices of critical items**

I was appalled to be informed by some of my constituents that a chemist in my consistency is selling hand sanitizers for £11.50 (or 3 for £30) for what appears to be a 100ml sized bottle. I contacted the chemist concerned who informed me that due to the large increase in the demand for hand sanitizers, these products are currently in short supply. As a result, wholesalers and other suppliers have increased their prices and, as a consequence, retailers are increasing their prices in order to sell at a profit.

This raises two important concerns:

- i) Price increases by suppliers of items making a crucial contribution to controlling the current epidemic;
- ii) Discounts on multiple purchases. This is counter-productive as it encourages bulk-buying, thereby exacerbating the short supply and potentially depriving some people of these crucial items.

In normal circumstances I would not suggest interfering in the free market, but we are in exceptional times. Many people are being prevented from taking the very precautions the Government is encouraging as they cannot either buy or afford the items required. I therefore should be grateful to know what action the Government is taking to ensure that suppliers and retailers are not permitted to exploit the current crisis to make a 'quick profit', and are not encouraging stockpiling of essential items by offering discounts.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew".

**MATTHEW OFFORD MP**

Member of Parliament for Hendon