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Dear Rishi

Beyond the Winter Economic Plan

I wanted to write to you following publication of the Winter Economic Plan to invite you once again to meet with the TUC and trade union General Secretaries to discuss the measures we believe are still needed to support jobs, and

As you know, we welcomed the introduction of a limited short-time working scheme in the Job Support Scheme. But even since your announcement last week restrictions on economic activity have tightened significantly, with more local lockdowns being announced and many more expected.

Without additional support for workers and businesses affected by public health restrictions, we are concerned that the overall package will still leave many workers at risk of unemployment and those who do lose their jobs facing hardship, even when these jobs are viable in the longer term.

We believe that the worsening economic picture calls for additional support. As you know, our proposals for a successor to the Job Retention Scheme suggested that:

- Businesses in areas hit by local lockdowns, and in sectors which have been forced to close by government, should not face a requirement for their staff to work a minimum number of hours, given the fact that the government is preventing any economic activity taking place rather than the business not being viable.
- Workers in the group who were previously asked to shield and cannot work outside the home due to health risks and those with caring responsibilities who will be prevented from working by, for example, the ongoing

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temporary closure of school classes, should also not be required to perform a minimum hours requirement in order to be eligible for support.

- Measures should be in place to ensure that the self-employed received a similar level of support to those in employment. The level of support received through the proposed replacement SEISS is simply too low for self-employed people to survive on.
- The level of employer contribution and hours requirements within the scheme must be kept under review if they prove to be a barrier to take up, and assessment of this must include the interaction with the Job Retention Bonus and employment prospects after January.

We would also urge you to look again at the wider package of support we believe is essential to protect livelihoods across the country. In particular we would highlight the need for:

- A National Recovery Council to help shape a strategy to protect and create decent jobs, and to guide the design of sectoral recovery packages for the hardest hit industries of the economy.
- A comprehensive programme of job creation. We have set out plans for:
 - The creation of over a million jobs in the next two years in the green industries we need to compete in the future.
 - A public sector jobs drive to ensure we can deliver the public services we need, and provide decent jobs across the country.
- An immediate boost in the level of Universal Credit. It is clear that the level of Universal Credit is insufficient to live on and will leave many families facing hardship. We believe that the basic amount should be raised to £280 a week, and reforms put in place to ensure that everyone eligible can access the support they need, when they need it.
- A plan to recognise the contribution of key workers, including a significant rise in the national minimum wage, and an immediate end to zero hours contracts.

- A significant injection of funding into childcare to avoid the collapse of the sector, and disastrous impacts for women's employment prospects.

We hope that you will be able to make progress on these issues in the near future, and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these and other issues in a meeting with union general secretaries,

Yours sincerely

PD

Frances O'Grady
General Secretary