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The **Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice** (GA) supports universal health coverage (UHC) that is accessible and implemented equitably across all nations. As a contributor to social justice, UHC must equally recognize mental and behavioral health (MH/BH) from a life course approach - inclusive of prevention, early-intervention, and treatment - as critical to delivering the human right to health.

Mental health problems, including alcohol abuse, are among the ten leading causes of disability in both developed and developing countries. About 1 in 4 people globally will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime, and persons with mental health problems are more likely to develop diabetes, heart disease, stroke, HIV/AIDS, other chronic conditions.ⁱ Inclusion of MH/BH in UHC is critical to addressing gaps in treatment for mental health services (75% to 90% in LMICs, and 40% - 70% in developed countriesⁱⁱ), and insufficient education and training, which can lead to the inadequate use of evidence-based intervention.ⁱⁱⁱ The right to the highest attainable standard of health demands nothing less.

Therefore, the GA respectfully calls upon UN Member States to reaffirm your commitment to the WHO Mental Health Global Action Plan 2013-2020 (MHAP) as the roadmap for country-led policies and plans that are resourced and implemented using evidence-driven interventions. We further call on States to reaffirm the WHO Mental Health Gap Action Program (mhGAP)^{iv}, with goals of scaling up mental health services in non-specialized health settings to achieve universal health coverage, reducing the mental health treatment gap, and enhancing the capacity of States to provide services that are available and adaptable to specific country and cultural contexts.

Our global membership will support Member States and national leaders in developing and implementing policies that ensure UHC as a fundamental right for all, inclusive of mental health and behavioral health, and as an investment in strengthening community and country-level health and wellbeing.

Respectfully submitted,

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ⁱ WHO (2013). Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2021 [Online at: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/about/organization/gmh/grandchallenges/index.shtml>]

ⁱⁱ Unite for Sight (2016) Barriers to MH Care [Online at: <http://www.uniteforsight.org/mental-health/module6>]

ⁱⁱⁱ Patel, V. (2007) Mental health in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. *British Medical Bulletin*. V. 82; 81-96. Oxford University Press: UK

^{iv}WHO (2018). Mental Health Gap Action Programme. [online at: https://www.who.int/mental_health/mhgap/en/]