

allowed to benefit from this discount as well.

As VA focuses on resolving homelessness, instead of just managing it, housing stability is increasingly a focus across the continuum of programs VA offers to eligible veterans. This bill will also modify VA's Grant and Per Diem Program, its largest transitional housing program, to allow VA to incentivize grantees to increase their focus on permanent housing and housing stability in support of the transitional housing program. More specifically, this bill provides VA with much needed authority to allow transitional housing providers to utilize their facility for permanent housing, and to receive a reduced per diem payment to provide case management for participating veterans. This would allow communities that are reaching critical junctures in the fight to end homelessness to repurpose existing transitional housing capacity for more pressing needs, such as permanent housing opportunities for veterans.

As many initiatives across VA have faced performance challenges, it is paramount that we continue to examine all VA initiatives and identify metrics that can be tracked to keep the Department accountable. This legislation includes a provision that would require VA to set national performance targets for entities that receive per diem funding for transitional housing and examine them to determine whether the grantee's performance merits continued funding. Further, this bill also contains a provision that would prompt VA to utilize the data it collects to better target interventions offered by its assertive community teams engaging homeless veterans on the street. Requiring a more targeted effort focused on homeless veterans who are health care "super-utilizers" will reduce unnecessary utilization of health care and, subsequently the costs for care.

Research has indicated that housing can be an effective health care intervention when paired with appropriate services and resources. At its very simplest, homelessness among veterans is preventable when there is coordination among the many services and resources available to lift a veteran up. We cannot sit by idly and allow another veteran to slip through the cracks. We must reach out and let them know when, where, and how to get the help that they need and that they have earned.

This is not a full recitation of all the provisions within this legislation. However, I hope that I have provided an appropriate overview of the major benefits this legislation would provide.

#### SAFER OFFICERS AND SAFER CITIZENS ACT OF 2015

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I join Senators TIM SCOTT and LINDSEY GRAHAM in introducing the Safer Officers and Safer Citizens Act of 2015. This

critical legislation moves our Nation a step forward in rebuilding the trust gap between law enforcement and communities by creating a Federal grant program to supply local, State, and tribal law enforcement with body-worn cameras. I thank Senator SCOTT for his work on this bill and his leadership on such a critical issue.

Trust between law enforcement and communities is critical to the foundation of our democracy. It reinforces the legitimacy of the State to the people that the State serves. It assures the public that the people sworn to protect them will do so honorably or be held accountable when they don't. It builds transparency and promotes open government by shining a spotlight on police-citizen interaction so that no misconduct occurs in the dark. It ensures police officers that the community will see their side and not cast unmerited aspersions.

But recent police-citizen encounters in our Nation have created a trust deficit between law enforcement and the communities that they serve. Over the past year, troubling use of force incidents have occurred between police officers and citizens in places like Ferguson, MO, Baltimore, MD, and North Charleston, SC. These events spurred a national dialogue about the state of policing in America, and created an urgency for body-worn cameras.

When I served as mayor of New Jersey's largest city, I saw firsthand the difficulties law enforcement faced in keeping our communities safe. The overwhelming majority of police officers in the United States are decent and hardworking Americans who have dedicated their lives to a greater calling. But let us not mistake ourselves—we have a problem in our country. Over the past few years, trust has eroded between law enforcement and the communities they serve. The unfortunate actions of a few have cast a long shadow over the good work of many.

I am also concerned that systemic issues have contributed to eroding the trust between communities and police. It comes from decades of a failed War on Drugs. Minority communities are routinely subject to stop and frisk policies. People are stopped for "suspicious" activities like acting too nervous, acting too calm, dressing casually, or wearing expensive clothes or jewelry. The fact is that five times as many Whites report using drugs as African Americans, yet African Americans are sent to prison for drug crimes ten times that of whites. Of course a lack of trust will exist when our criminal justice system as a whole disproportionately targets minorities.

It is time we start rebuilding that trust. This bill is about transparency. The Safer Officer and Safer Citizens Act of 2015 would require that the Department of Justice give priority to States, localities, and tribal areas that have developed comprehensive body-worn camera policies that address such issues as privacy, data retention, and

victim protection. It would also give priority to jurisdictions that consult victim and juvenile advocacy groups, labor organizations, civic leadership, law enforcement professionals, and the defense bar. The bill requires States, localities, and tribal units to collect data on the effectiveness of body cameras.

Body-worn cameras will protect communities from police abuses of power and simultaneously protect police from false complaints. I am proud to join with Senators SCOTT and GRAHAM in introducing the Safer Officer and Safer Citizens Act of 2015, and I urge its speedy passage.

#### 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this week we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the passage of landmark civil rights legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA outlawed discrimination on the basis of physical or developmental ability and sought to grant those with disabilities the same opportunities as other Americans.

In the past quarter century, this law has changed our social fabric as well as of our physical surroundings. Every newly built building or sidewalk with basic accommodations lets more and more of our fellow citizens live fuller lives as self-sufficient members of our communities.

Before there were curb cutouts, some Rhode Islanders couldn't cross the street. Before there were wheelchair lifts on public buses, some Rhode Islanders couldn't commute to work. Before there were assisted listening devices, some Rhode Islanders couldn't follow a professor's lecture or a pastor's sermon. Before there were Braille signs, some Rhode Islanders couldn't find a doctor's office or a child's classroom without assistance. Before there were accessible voting systems, some of us couldn't even exercise our most basic rights as citizens.

My colleague in Rhode Island's congressional delegation, Congressman JIM LANGEVIN, has a special perspective on this groundbreaking law. "As someone who has lived with the challenges of a disability both before and after the enactment of the ADA," he has said, "I have experienced firsthand the profound changes of this law on our society."

JIM was only sixteen when an accidental injury left him paralyzed. In an amazing example of optimism and courage, JIM went on to serve the people of our State in the Rhode Island House of Representatives and as our Secretary of State. Today he is the first quadriplegic to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. On the day he was the first person ever to preside in the House in a wheelchair, I trooped over from the Senate to watch history made.