

Bill would end hospital fees for mentally retarded youths

ADVANCE ALBANY BUREAU

ALBANY — An amendment to the Mental Hygiene Law, which would eliminate any and all costs to parents for care of their children in state schools for the mentally retarded, has been introduced here by Assemblyman Edward J. Amann.

The bill was drafted by the Joint Legislative Committee on the Mentally and Physically Handicapped, of which the Staten Islander is a member.

He explained that since 1966 parents of persons over 21 who are being cared for in state mental schools have been exempt from any charges for such service.

END REIMBURSEMENTS

His new bill would specifically eliminate collection by the state of reimbursements from parents of children under 21 in state schools for the retarded, such as Willowbrook State School on Staten Island.

The assemblyman said that last year the state collected charges ranging from a few hundred dollars to \$5,700 from parents with a child in a state school for the mentally retarded.

"Many states provide such services free," he said, "be-

cause of the great economic hardship the care of such a child can bring. Since the law does not require parents of children 21 and over in such schools to reimburse the state, the committee feels that such costs should be eliminated for all parents.

Amann said that a low-income family having a child in a state school is not required to pay, that the charges are based on the ability of parents to pay. He said all middle income families, including those classed as low-middle income, are required to pay. These charges have increased considerably in recent years to help meet increased costs of operating the schools.