

# Willowbrook faces quiz on care

## Titone orders show cause hearing

Supreme Court Justice Vito J. Titone has ordered the State Mental Hygiene Department and the directors of the Willowbrook State School to show cause why they should not be held responsible for alleged injuries to a 21-year-old woman resident there.

The order, returnable next Friday, was obtained by Bronx Congressman Mario Biaggi, who is seeking public court hearings on conditions at Willowbrook to determine whether the state has violated the Mental Hygiene Act for the care and treatment of the mentally retarded.

Biaggi is representing Miss Adrienne Renelli and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Renelli of the Bronx, who want court safeguards insuring proper medical attention and protection from injuries for their retarded daughter.

### BEATEN TWICE

It was charged that the girl had been beaten twice earlier this year and suffered repeated injuries since March, when Biaggi initiated the suit in the Bronx. The case was transferred to Staten Island on a jurisdictional question.

The state is now ordered to respond to an alleged violation of a directive from Bronx Supreme Court Justice Donald J. Sullivan, who requested that Miss Renelli be given special care while the lawsuit was pending.

Named as respondents in the case were the department, Dr. Allen Miller, state mental hygiene commissioner, Dr. Jack Hammond, former director of the school, and State Attorney General Louis J. Lefkowitz's office.

### Titone's decision to issue the

order opens up the possibility of wider hearings on Biaggi's action, in which he claims the state violated the law by failing to provide patients with adequate training and education.

Biaggi also asked the court to establish "a standard of care" given to patients under the state mental hygiene laws.

In arguing for a public hearing, Biaggi said the suit was within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, since it was not an individual claim against the state by Miss Renelli but a class action on behalf of all residents at the school.

### COUNTERED CHARGES

In earlier court proceedings, an assistant state attorney general countered charges that Miss Renelli had been beaten, and claimed that the woman, who is retarded and subject to epileptic fits, had injured herself in a fall.

During a conference on Biaggi's suit two weeks ago, Titone reportedly proposed the appointment of a select panel of independent citizens to make an in-depth study of conditions at Willowbrook and recommend improvements. The committee, according to one source, would have operated "outside the sphere of politics."

The proposal reportedly was made in the belief that an independent commission could have provided quicker relief for the residents and avoid pending litigation.

However, Lefkowitz was said to have rejected the idea on the grounds that there were sufficient investigations now in progress by state and federal authorities.