

Our opinion

Research is being retarded

Gov. Carey himself has described the Institute for Basic Research in Mental Retardation on the grounds of Willowbrook Developmental Center as "grossly underutilized." Yet budget cuts proposed by the governor would result in curtailment of some of the institute's programs as well as some of its staff members' jobs.

The final decision, of course, is up to the Legislature, and we think Staten Island's representatives should seek to hold off this threat to the institute, which is doing a prime job in finding causes and possible remedies for retardation, thus making it possible to restore some people to productive lives in their own communities instead of confining them to expensive care in state institutions like Willowbrook.

Dr. Henry Wisniewski, director of the \$12 million research center since July, said that he had also

hoped to provide service to the community by the institute's facilities, and that cutbacks would also impair a productive relationship established with the Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn. He further added that the news of fiscal problems will make it more difficult to attract especially qualified scientists for its research programs, and has also caused some of its employees to seek jobs elsewhere.

It's especially ironic that while these cutbacks are being considered many state legislators have spoken out about a need for an increase in their salaries, claiming that their job is becoming more and more of a full-time stint. Well, so is the research that retarded humans are entitled to.

There have been no salary increases or promotions at the institute for more than two years, and its staff is still waiting for some

specialized equipment which is essential to continued research.

Dr. Wisniewski said he was told that he would eventually be able to hire 240 additional staff members, bringing the facility up to its capacity. But who knows how many years it will take to make that promise come true?

If those cuts aren't fended off by the Legislature, some people in other state institutions who have seniority may be taking over some of the institute's jobs, even though they don't have the background and training needed for the work.

There have been inordinate delays in cutting down the resident population at Willowbrook Developmental Center despite court orders obtained by parent groups. Why must there be delays in this vital research as well?