

Marchi: Halt release of some mental patients

Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY—State Sen. John J. Marchi yesterday called on the Department of Mental Hygiene to temporarily halt the release of former mental patients who have a documented history of violent behavior.

Marchi, in a letter to DMH Commissioner Lawrence Kolb, based his request on the April 3 rape and beating of a 7-year-old girl near the Silver Lake reservoir, allegedly committed by a resident of the Willowbrook Developmental Center.

The senator said his request for the moratorium on the release of some patients could be viewed as "a drastic measure," but he added: "Clearly the time has come for serious steps to be taken."

"Indeed, I believe the very viability of our move toward treatment in the community rests upon the department's ability to avert a recurrence of the tragedy that was most recently experienced on Staten Island," Marchi said.

The Ward Hill Republican added that the moratorium on patient releases should remain in effect until "the department can demonstrate its ability to carry out community-based programs safely."