

# Connelly bill on aid passes Assembly

## Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — The Assembly yesterday approved a bill that would require local health officials, including those on Staten Island, to develop community facilities for the mentally retarded to qualify for state aid.

The measure, sponsored by Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly, would require borough health officials to provide for hostels, halfway houses and other such facilities in the local services plan they submit every year to the state mental hygiene offices as a preliminary to assistance requests.

According to Mrs. Connelly, the purpose of the measure is to force localities into a "commitment" to establish housing where mentally disabled persons can get "aftercare" services necessary to keep them out of big institutions.

She said that while the bill would not create any new programs for the community facilities, it would ensure that an adequate amount of aid would be allocated for the residences already mandated by the state.

Although the measure passed easily by a 95 to 22 margin, it generated some vocal opposition from Republican members who predicted the bill would be used as a device to foist unwanted facilities in communities throughout the state. "This would make it a lot easier to ram these things down our throats," said Alfred DelliBovi of Queens.

The GOP members also argued that the counties would have to pay for the facilities because state aid was not sufficient.

**Mrs. Connelly responded that the**

state funding was adequate and that the bill merely represented an "attempt to solve the problems" of communities where the state has placed facilities without local participation in the planning process.

The assemblywoman also said she had obtained support for the bill with leaders from both parties in the Senate.

In related matters, the Assembly unanimously approved the following two other bills sponsored by Mrs. Connelly, the chairwoman of the Mental Hygiene Committee.

¶ To establish a central registry at the Department of Social Services for all community health facilities in the state. The registry would help planners avoid putting too many facilities in different areas. Under the measure, the department would have to report to Gov. Carey on ways to improve the planning for the facilities.

¶ To permit the release of mental patient records to Department of Corrections officials. Mrs. Connelly explained that the records are needed by corrections personnel who are treating prison inmates who have spent time in mental institutions.

The first two measures passed by the Assembly yesterday were part of Carey's controversial plan to transfer thousands of mental patients and retarded persons from such big institutions as the Staten Island Developmental Center to community programs over the next few years.

The program also includes a bill to set up the following procedures for locating small mental health facilities in the city

and other municipalities.  
¶ State mental hygiene commissioners would notify the mayor, or presumably the City Planning Commission, in writing of a proposal to put a facility in the city.

¶ Planning officials would then have 30 to 40 days to object to the recommended sites and suggest alternatives.

¶ If the alternatives are rejected by the department, the city will then have another 15 days to compromise on a site.

¶ If the city flatly objects to the facility, the commissioner would hold a hearing on the proposal and make a decision

within 30 days of the hearing. Under the bill, the hearing officer could sustain the objection if he determines that the facility "would substantially alter the nature and character of the neighborhood."

¶ The city could seek a review of the hearing officer's decision in court.

Mrs. Connelly said the purpose of the bill was to "stretch out" the planning process for the facilities over a long period of time to ensure community participation. The administrative procedures alone could take as long as 105 days while a court appeal could last six months, she said.