

# Marchi: It's time to look at group home influx

By BRUCE ALPERT

Sen. John J. Marchi, saying some Staten Island residents believe that the borough is bearing "more than its reasonable share" of group homes, called on Gov. Carey yesterday to "stabilize" the population at such facilities until a study is completed.

"We in this fast-growing borough need a comprehensive report from the state on where we stand in comparison with other counties with respect to the number of state-approved facilities, especially community residential locations," Marchi said.

Marchi, a Ward Hill Republican-Conservative, said he also wants the Carey administration to determine if the Island's health facilities are able to absorb the added burden of community residences.

The senator, who said he supports the judgment of mental health professionals that non-institutional care is the most effective, insisted that he was not calling for a moratorium on the development of new group homes.

"I understand that the state is under court mandate to develop community residential facilities," said Marchi, alluding to the Willowbrook Consent De-

creed, which requires that residents be transferred from the Staten Island Developmental Center to group homes and other community facilities.

But Marchi said, "Surely the development of community residences should be slowed" until a thorough state evaluation of community placement programs is completed.

State Mental Retardation Commissioner Thomas A. Coughlin said he agreed with Marchi that a study is needed.

"When I met with the senator last week, we discussed a central registry of residential facilities, which clearly

showed that the Island's rate per 1,000 population is the highest in the city and the fourth highest in New York state," Coughlin said. "Certainly that warrants further study."

Coughlin, who was nominated by Carey to become state prison commissioner effective Wednesday, noted he has already ordered a moratorium on the development of new group homes in the Community Board 1 area of the Island "until Community Boards 2 and 3 catch up."

According to the central registry of group homes facilities released by the state Department of Social Services in

February, the Island had 7.59 state residential beds per 1,000 population. Only Sullivan, Schuyler and Schoharie Counties had a higher figure.

Coughlin said the figures are somewhat misleading because they include such institutional facilities as the 600-bed Karl Werner Center at the Staten Island Developmental Center and the 50-bed Nina Eaton Center at the South Beach Psychiatric Center.

Most state residential facilities listed in the state registry are group homes operated by the Department of Social Services for foster care and children referred to the state for custodial care by

Family Court.

"What the senator is requesting is perfectly legitimate," said Coughlin, who served as director of the Staten Island Developmental Center in 1975. "But I know he realizes that as far as our mentally retarded residents of state institutions are concerned, we are under court mandate to place them in community facilities."

Marchi, in his letter to Carey, said he did not make his request as an "obstructionist measure, but rather as a way of assuring that our concern is matched by that of our other counties in New York state."