

# Marchi proposes new panel to determine sites for nursing, group homes across state

## Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — Sen. John J. Marchi proposed yesterday the creation of a new agency that would determine when and where state agencies can locate group homes, nursing homes and other residential facilities across the state.

Marchi, a Republican - Conservative lawmaker, said the new agency would be more responsive to community needs than the state agencies that currently are given siting authority.

"I have put this bill in the Senate," Marchi said. "to bring some order, reason and sensitivity to local needs, to the existing, slipshod manner in which the state now operates."

Introduction of the legislation follows release of a state report last week indicating that Staten Island, on a per capita basis, has double the percentage of group homes than other boroughs. It also follows a decision by the Public Health Council to grant a state permit to Beth Rifka, a Brooklyn-based religious group, to operate the Danube Nursing Home in Concord.

Marchi has sharply criticized the council's decision, saying that it ignored the impact the opening of the nursing

home would have on Island hospitals, which, he said, are already operating at near capacity. He has also said that the borough should not house a disproportionate percentage of group homes.

"Too often, throughout the state, agencies set up new facilities without considering the impact of such new quarters on the community in which they are established," said Marchi, who chairs the powerful Senate Finance Committee.

The agency proposed under a bill introduced by Marchi would be known as the Community Facilities Siting Board. The bill stipulates that the 21-member board "shall be representative of the public, including persons identified with consumers of hospitals, nursing homes, adult homes, youth homes and mental hygiene services."

Current law provides a variety of state mechanisms for approving the establishment of community facilities.

In each case, the state agency involved with a particular class of community facilities provides the formal structure for evaluating and considering facility applications for approval or rejection.

The bill would require the board to plan and work with local governments, voluntary agencies and organizations primarily concerned with hospitals, nursing home, adult home, youth centers and other health agencies to develop "an effective, integrated and comprehensive system for the siting of such facilities."

Under the bill, seven members of the board would be appointed by the governor, seven by the Senate majority leader and seven by the Assembly speaker.

Marchi estimated the cost of operating the proposed agency at \$100,000 a year. Members of the board would be

reimbursed for expenses, but would not receive salaries, he said.

Officials from the state Office of Health Systems Management and the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, which currently have siting authority, respectively, for nursing homes and group homes for the retarded, were unavailable for comment yesterday.

Another Marchi bill, which would place a moratorium on the licensing of nursing homes until July 1, is expected to pass the Senate today. The legislation is aimed at blocking final approval of the Beth Rifka application.