

## Mentally ill unable to endure more cuts

The following was sent to Gov. Mario Cuomo:

"The Board of Visitors of South Beach Psychiatric Center is writing to express its concern about the current New York State hiring freeze and the implications of your new budget....

"Regarding the freeze, we acknowledge that exempting physicians, nurses, and a few other positions is helpful. However, psychiatric treatment and the quality of life for patients are dependent on other professional staff and support workers as well. Fewer social workers means discharge planning will be hampered; less housekeeping staff means the units will be less clean; less rehabilitation staff means less patient programming, and the list could go on. Furthermore, the freeze on hiring outpatient staff means less community supports for patients at a time when the state is being severely criticized for just this issue.

"Based on your budget message, the freeze that has been in existence since September is ap-

parently only the beginning of a major retrenchment in the area of mental health. The progress made in enriching patient to staff ratios, the development of state-run community services, the upgrading of services to meet federal and accreditation standards — all seem highly vulnerable under your new budget. It is difficult to understand how decreasing the Office of Mental staff by 2,500 or 4,000 or more will not dramatically and negatively affect the quality of services to the mentally ill.

"We recognize the extraordinary fiscal pressure you face as governor and we accept the need for sacrifice and cooperation from all New York citizens. We feel strongly, however, that the mentally ill are the least able to shoulder these burdens. We are requesting that you consider other options to balance the budget and minimize the serious cutbacks in mental health services."

ANNETTE CURTIS-WILLIAMS  
South Beach

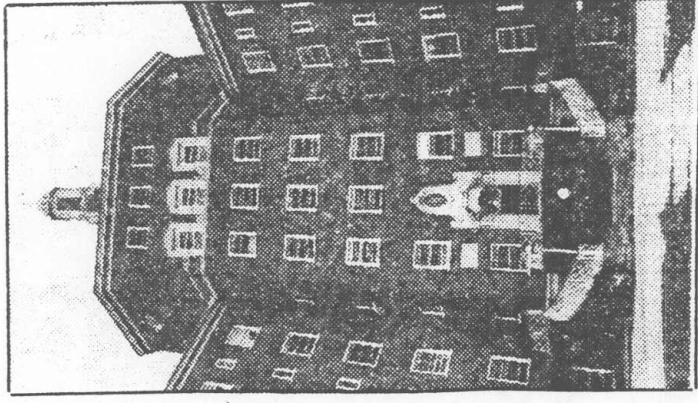
(The writer is secretary of the Board of Visitors.)

## House homeless at Willowbrook

The following was sent to Gov. Mario Cuomo:

"...Your attention to the plight of the homeless is most commendable. As a resident of Staten Island, I ironically find myself in agreement with that other guy who ran for governor, Mayor Ed Koch. Ed has been stating for some time that this is a problem for the entire city and that provincial interests of specific communities must be surrendered to the relief of the matter citywide. As an active member of my community, I have been disheartened by the voices in our local leadership who state that any facility on Staten Island should be for homeless Staten Islanders only. Fortunately in this wilderness, we hear the lone voice of City Councilmember Mary Codd, who aptly points out that homeless people do not have any address and questions what absurd criteria must be established to determine one's roots.

"I suggest that one Staten Island facility that might be utilized in housing the homeless is the Staten Island Developmental Center. As you are aware, under the previous administration, the resident population at SIDC was greatly reduced under court mandate. Unlike other potential sites on Staten Island, such as Sea View Hospital and Home-or



A building at the Staten Island Developmental Center.

S. I. Advance Photo

Snug Harbor, the vacated buildings have not suffered massive deterioration which would mandate huge sums to make them meet fire and safety standards.

"As the crisis of the homeless is most brutal during the winter season, I ask that your staff pursue making the state-owned facilities at the center available to the city immediately for housing the homeless."

JOHN W. LAVELLE  
Brighton Heights