

# More details due on center closing

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ALBANY — Further details will be released Monday on how the Cuomo administration would finance the proposed 1987 closing of the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook, a top official said yesterday.

Commissioner Arthur Y. Webb of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities also said a "comprehensive" plan for such a closing is due to be made public by Feb. 1.

Some of the information should be included in the governor's executive budget proposal to the Legislature, to be revealed here Monday, Webb said.

Webb gave the status report but did not elaborate during an hour of testimony yesterday before the Assembly Committee on Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism.

Committee Chairwoman Elizabeth A. Connelly, D-West Brighton, said afterward that Webb agreed to discuss the closing plan with the panel prior to its formal submission to Cuomo.

Cuomo said in his annual State of the State message he had requested the plan for the center's "orderly closure," which he said would help to end a "regrettable chapter in the treatment of the mentally retarded."

New York State is under court order to reduce the number of patients at the Willowbrook center to 250 by March of next year, but Cuomo has termed that level unacceptable for both financial and programmatic reasons.

The commissioner came under fire from committee members, who demanded to know when administration budget officials and the governor will an-

nounce how much will be restored to state developmental centers.

Cutbacks carried out by the state Budget Division last year reduced the office's work force and increased staff-to-patient ratios at centers such as Willowbrook around the state.

Several lawmakers say a division policy of withholding funds went against the explicit will of the Assembly and Senate, which voted for restoration of a share of the funding last spring.

Confronted by the committee, Webb alluded to Cuomo's vow, made in the governor's annual message to the lawmakers, to add 1,400 bed spaces to the state system assigned to care for retarded youngsters.

At one point, Assemblyman Robert C. Wertz, R-Suffolk, angrily chided Webb, "I don't think any member of the Legislature believes you or the governor about these 1,400 beds."

Wertz challenged Webb to "take on the governor, and say, 'Look, we need this money,'" for improving the quality of care for the retarded and mentally disabled.

If necessary, Webb should call for "deficiency spending" for the programs to allay current understaffing and a reported retrenchment in programs for the disabled, Wertz said.

As in previous public forums, Webb, who took office only a few months ago, defended the system as one of the most advanced in the country, despite the "painful" cutbacks.

Webb insisted it was not his job to answer specific questions about the planned release of funds from the Budget Division.

About 20 concerned citizens, including parents, packed the small hearing room in Mrs. Connelly's office suite in the capitol complex to hear the remarks.