

Queens legislator sees no need for SIDC closing

By DAN JANISON

Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — Queens has become another county heard from in the series of skeptical statements that have greeted Gov. Mario M. Cuomo's plan announced last week to close the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook.

Senate Mental Health Committee Chairman Frank Padavan, a Queens Republican, told the Advance he sees no need for the closing.

"I don't think it should be a driving force" in shaping programs to move mentally retarded and disabled residents out of institutions into community residences, he said.

Padavan's counterpart in the Assembly, Elizabeth A. Connelly, D-West Brighton, said she doesn't see any purpose other than "symbolic" to phase out the facility as planned, in mid-1987.

Padavan said he was surprised by the governor's proposal.

Asked to speculate on a reason, he said, "The state appears to be interested in the economic possibilities for the real estate."

Both lawmakers said state mental health policy should now move toward solving problems associated with clients who "age out" of the facilities when they reach 21 and care for them is ended by the state.

Cuomo officials cite an increase in the projected number of beds for the mentally ill and retarded, called for in the next fiscal year.

In addition, Padavan wondered aloud what plans would be for the future of the Karl D. Warner center on the Willowbrook grounds, run by United Cerebral Palsy.