

'Full status report' on SIDC project promised

ADVANCE ALBANY BUREAU

ALBANY — The chief state official in charge of the care of the retarded yesterday promised Assembly Mental Health Chairwoman Elizabeth Connelly, D-West Brighton, a "full status report" within a week on a long-

sought facility.

At a budget hearing yesterday, Mrs. Connelly quizzed Arthur Webb, director of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, about construction of the Richmond complex in Willowbrook.

The complex as planned would provide day recreation on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center, due to close by the end of the year.

Webb reported some problems had to be surmounted involving heating systems on the SIDC grounds, the scheduled site of a

new campus for the College of Staten Island.

"The success we've had on Staten Island is really quite remarkable," Webb said. "By the time we finish, it will become a symbol of excellence."

Webb said later that placement of clients from SIDC had not run into problems similar to those elsewhere in the city, where community space for the retarded is scarce and costly.

Mrs. Connelly cited "gaps" in placements of clients into community residences off Staten Island.

People wearing buttons aimed at protesting possible staff cuts stemming from Gov. Mario Cuomo's proposed budget crowded into the hearing yester-

day.

Webb discussed with Senate Mental Hygiene Committee Chairman Nicholas Spano, R-Westchester, the problems that arise when workers go on workmen's compensation and do not get replaced on the job temporarily.

Webb also had rave reviews for the Institute for Basic Research in Willowbrook, which Senate Finance Chairman John Marchi noted at the hearing had achieved worldwide acclaim for probing causes of disabilities.

"The payoff in basic research has been so phenomenal. We need to expand the capacity. The budget calls for that. We also need opportunities to extend basic prevention."