



JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

A BILL IN THE STATE SENATE sponsored by Sandra B. Cunningham, D-Jersey City, would mandate informing officials if a hospital applies to close.

Moving to give officials alerts on hosp closings

By **MEGAN DeMARCO**
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

A bill intended to give local leaders the chance to prevent hospital closings was approved by a state Senate committee yesterday.

The bill, co-sponsored by Sen. Sandra B. Cunningham, D-Jersey City, would require hospitals to notify mayors, council members, senators and Assembly members when a hospital files a certificate of need with the state to close.

Jason Butkowski, a spokesman for the Senate majority office, said the bill is intended to give local officials enough time to try to prevent a hospital from closing or secure alternate

means of care for residents.

Eighteen hospitals have closed in New Jersey since 1992, including Greenville Hospital in Jersey City, which shut its doors last month.

The bill — which was approved by the Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee — would make it so that "everybody knows right from the start that the hospital is in trouble," said Butkowski.

He said in the past, local leaders might not have been aware that a hospital was closing until the last minute.

"That time could have been used to find alternate health care solutions," he said.