

Warns Nursing Homes

BY WILLIAM JONES

Gov. Ogilvie yesterday announced an increase in the number of nursing home inspectors and declared that owners of the homes have 30 days to correct health code violations or be closed.

"It does no good to indict the entire nursing home industry for the performance of those who have so badly failed their patients," Ogilvie said in a special message to the General Assembly.

"Many dedicated people are providing dedicated care in sound facilities," Ogilvie said. "Our problem is to identify and eliminate the exceptions who have taken advantage of the unfortunate."

Ogilvie made his statement as a United States Senate subcommittee investigating Illinois nursing homes prepared to open hearings at 9:30 a. m. today at the University of Illinois Circle Campus. The two-day hearing was called following a series on Chicago area nursing home abuses compiled by TRIBUNE Task Force reporters working in cooperation with the Better Government Association.

The Senate Subcommittee on Long Term Care is headed by Sen. Frank E. Moss (D., Utah).

Other legislators scheduled to participate in the hearings are Senators Percy (R., Ill.), Stevenson (D., Ill.) and Vance Hartke (D., Ind.).

In his health care message, Ogilvie also announced formation of a preadmission examination center for elderly persons seeking admission to a state mental hospital. He said the program will be developed by the state Mental Health, Public Health and Public Aid departments. The governor suggested that in Chicago the program could be run from the West Side Medical Center.

Dr. Franklin Yoder, state public health director, said the increase in nursing home inspectors means that his inspection staff will be increased to 29 from 18, with most of the new ones assigned to the Chicago area.

THE TRIBUNE investigation disclosed that substandard nursing homes have operated with virtually no pressure from state health officials to clean up their operation. Gov. Ogilvie said that more than 58,000 elderly persons are now living in long-term care facilities in Illinois. He said the state is paying for the care of more than 50 per cent of these patients.