Local control of state homes sought

By Suzie Rollins Singer

The Oakland County Board of Com-missioners is calling on the Michigan Legislature to give communities great-er control over state-sponsored foster.

er control over state-sponsored toster. care homes.

The resolution/passed unanimously by the 27-member county board, spe-cifically addresses foster care homes for mentally and physically retarded adults. It calls for state programs and statutes to conform to local health,

safety and zoning ordinances.
In addition, commissioners request that the state provide compensation for property owners living in the immediate vicinity of group homes for partial loss of their property values. It does not determine the amount.

"IT'S WRONG to put the mentally ill in communities," said Commissioner Joseph Montante, R-Orchard Lake.

"There's also nothing in the law that addresses deed restrictions, and there's

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no local control of licensing," Montante added.
Under a 1977 state law, the state Department of Social Services was enpowered to license homes in residential neighborhoods for use as foster care facilities for retarded adults.
State law supercedes local deed restrictions and zoning ordinances. In a licensed home, a licensed operator—either an idependent or one affiliated with the Department of Social Services—administers the home. They are

with the Department of Social Services
— administers the home. They are
monitored by Department of Mental
Health representatives.

When a house is targeted as a foster
home, the state sends a letter informing the local officials of the impending
opening. Often the agency voluntarily
holds a public hearing, inviting residents to hear about the new operation.

SOME COUNTY commissioners con-tend that foster care homes are pop-ping up all over communities and an-gering local lawmakers.

'It's wrong to put the mentally ill in communities.'

> — Joseph Montante, Oakland County commissione

One point in their resolution asks the state not to "overconcentrate" areas with homes. Presently, the only regulation is that facilities cannot be within 1,500 feet of one another, and if the city's population is more than one million, the distance is 3,000 feet.

"Some of the over-concentration oc curs because there are many unli-censed homes in areas, and we ad-dressed that concern quite strongly in the resolution," said Commissioner Marilynn Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills.

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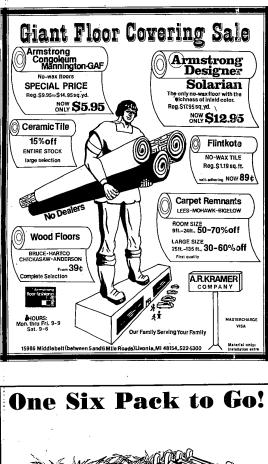
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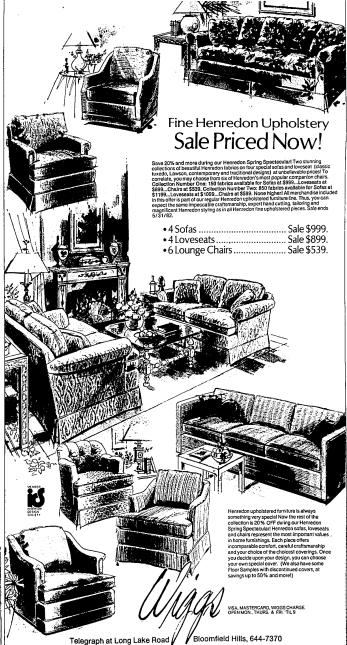
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