

This bill requires the Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene and Education jointly to develop and make available standards and guidelines for a program to screen the speech and hearing of all children residing in the State before they reach the age of three. The local health and education agencies are required to "implement and maintain these preschool speech and hearing screening procedures." The bill has an effective date of July 1, 1975.

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene estimates that, in the first year of operation (fiscal year 1976), 118,000 children will have to be screened by virtue of House Bill 691 at a cost of \$8.00 per child. The gross cost would therefore be \$944,000, of which the State's share would be \$493,600. An additional \$80,000 in administrative expenses for the two State agencies is estimated to be necessary to implement the bill, making the total cost to the State for the first year \$573,600. The Department of Fiscal Services has estimated this total cost at \$550,800, with a concomitant cost to the subdivisions of \$386,800.

I am advised that speech and hearing screening services are presently available on a referral basis within the local health departments, and that the State Department of Education conducts such a program for children entering the first and ninth grades.

Certainly, the program provided for in this bill is a worthwhile one. The problem is simply that, with the fiscal constraints presently upon the State, which all evidence indicates will likely continue for the foreseeable future, we will be hard pressed to maintain even existing human needs programs. The inauguration of new programs carrying this magnitude of fiscal impact will, of economic necessity, have to be deferred unless the General Assembly is willing and able to provide a new source of funding for them.

For these reasons, I have vetoed House Bill 691.

Sincerely,  
/s/ Marvin Mandel  
Governor

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House Bill No. 707 - Smoking in Elevators

AN ACT concerning