

# Detroit Free Press

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## Blue Cross accused of drafting bill language

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A coalition of commercial insurers claims Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan drafted new language for a compromise bill to change Michigan's individual health insurance market -- a charge the bill's supporters deny.

Rep. Virgil Smith, D-Detroit, chair of the House Insurance Committee, said Thursday that the commercial insurers "are trying to be obstructionists in the process."

Smith heads a House and Senate work group trying to find areas of compromise between bills passed last October by the House and ones passed in May by the Senate to, in part, allow nonprofit Blue Cross to operate more like commercial insurers.

The legislation also seeks to eliminate challenges by consumers and Michigan's attorney general to Blue Cross' proposed rate hikes; require commercial insurers to stop denying insurance to people with health problems, and let Blue Cross immediately raise rates, like commercial insurers, subject to state review.

The latest flap centered on a news release Thursday from the Coalition for Access and Affordability in Michigan, representing commercial insurers in a debate over the reforms. It said an e-mail from Smith's office left a trail that led to Blue Cross, said Denise DeCook, spokeswoman for the coalition. Smith said Blue Cross sent "three bullet points" that were included in three pages of suggested changes that his office circulated Thursday to groups interested in the legislation. "They thought they had a smoking gun, but there isn't one. This isn't a draft bill."