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Tom Wolff: CDH's free care not an answer to city's PILOT request

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To the editor:

The headline of Cooley Dickinson Hospital's Nov. 6 guest column in response to the Northampton mayor's PILOT proposal boldly states "CDH provides \$270,000 in free care."

CDH needs to be praised for its free care but we need to be clear that free care is an assumed service for nonprofit hospitals doing business in Massachusetts.

So although we can be thankful for CDH's free care, we must also be aware that this is an expected service of nonprofit hospitals.

Free care is part of a range of "community benefits" that hospitals are expected to provide that goes well beyond free care.

Community benefits of hospitals are monitored by the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office.

Obamacare (the Affordable Care Act) also lays out expectations for hospitals to provide community benefits and adds the monitoring of these benefits by the Internal Revenue Service.

The IRS is interested in seeing that the community benefits provided by hospitals justify their nonprofit status.

So we can all be thankful for the free care CDH provides but it is hardly an answer to the mayor's PILOT request.

Tom Wolff

Leverett

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