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# Joanne Marqusee & Sanford Belden: CDH's greatest role is fulfilling mission of providing health care

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NORTHAMPTON — As leaders of Cooley Dickinson Hospital, one of Hampshire County's anchor institutions and Northampton's largest employer, we recognize how important it is to support the city and its residents. A city and its institutions and residents share an interdependence that relies on trust, cooperation and commitment to something larger than individual interests.

We understand the financial challenges facing all municipal governments and appreciate that Mayor David J. Narkewicz is doing all he can to balance the budget to sustain city services.

We have begun a dialogue with the mayor about the payment in lieu of taxes initiative and will continue that dialogue as he assesses input from the public comment period and issues his final PILOT request. Throughout this process, and in the planning and work we do every day, we are focused on our mission — meeting the health care needs of those in our community, including Northampton.

It's why we exist.

As we reviewed with the mayor all that Cooley Dickinson routinely does for the community and the city itself, we took to heart his suggestion to document — and educate the public about — the financial and programmatic investments we make throughout the year.

For example, last year Cooley Dickinson provided \$270,000 worth of free health care to uninsured and underinsured low-income Northampton residents (for the region as a whole, Cooley Dickinson provided over \$1.1 million in free care). Cooley Dickinson also provides the city of Northampton — at no charge — medical supplies for their ambulances and athletic trainers for the high school and Smith Vocational.

These two investments alone provide the city with over \$100,000 worth of goods and services per year. Additionally, we sponsor a number of public health and community health initiatives that serve the needs of area communities, including Northampton.

That's because, ultimately, we believe the greatest value we provide our community is through fulfilling our mission and providing high quality health care services.

We are proud that Cooley Dickinson has been here serving the health care needs of the community for more than 125 years. Being here and being always ready when you need us, whether for an office visit, x-ray or lab test, home-based services or hospice, advanced cancer care or in an emergency situation, is the most important thing we can do.

We are committed to providing unreimbursed services and investments locally to further our community-based mission and to working collaboratively with city departments and other organizations to improve the health of the community.

Joanne Marqusee is president and chief executive officer of Cooley Dickinson Health Care. Sanford Belden is chair of the board of trustees of Cooley Dickinson Health Care.

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