



SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 6.9: Digital Credential Program

2025-2026 General Assembly

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 6.9

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Prepared by: Legislative Analysis
Division Staff

Section 6.9 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) establishes the Digital Credential Program for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to evaluate the effectiveness of digital credential services for use by community college students. The Community Colleges System Office must contract with a vendor to provide digital credentialing services to all community colleges in the State. The vendor must provide a Credential Management System that meets the following criteria:

- Provides the capability to issue, manage, and verify digital credentials across multiple widely adopted open standards, including World Wide Web Consortium Verifiable Credentials, OpenBadges, and AnonCreds, within a single platform.
- Supports secure, persistent communication channels that enable authenticated, peer-to-peer interactions between parties.
- Meets or exceeds National Institute of Standards and Technology Identity Assurance Level 3 standards for identity proofing to ensure high confidence identity verification.
- Is designed as a decentralized deployment operating as a network appliance within the State's controlled cloud environment rather than as a multi-tenant Software as a Service offering to ensure data sovereignty, reduce long term operational costs, and eliminate dependency on third party hosted infrastructure.
- Includes a noncustodial mobile digital wallet that allows individuals to maintain sole control of their credentials.
- Includes configurable, standards-based workflows that extend agency processes directly to credential holders.
- Incorporates advanced capabilities for workforce matching, including artificial intelligence driven analysis that aligns verified credentials with employment opportunities.
- Includes trust and verification systems anchored using blockchain based mechanisms solely for publishing tamper resistant public keys and service endpoints, without storing any personally identifiable information or credential data-on-chain.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.

Kara McCraw
Director



Legislative Analysis
Division
919-733-2578