

NC Senate Bill 579 — Proposed Career Pathway Addition

Digital Economy & Responsible AI Careers

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THE GAP

Why This Pathway, Why Now

SB579 takes a bold step toward preparing North Carolina students for careers in healthcare and high-tech. But there is a gap. The bill does not name the fastest-growing adjacent sector: the digital economy infrastructure layer — the compliance officers, product managers, UX researchers, data annotators, and AI governance professionals who make technology trustworthy, usable, and accountable.

These jobs exist now. They pay well above median wage. They require judgment, communication, and ethics — skills AI cannot replace. And they are disproportionately inaccessible to low-income students who have no roadmap into them. This proposal closes that gap.

The Genius Act and Clarity Act are establishing federal frameworks for digital asset regulation. RegTech — technology that automates compliance — is projected to be one of the fastest-growing sectors of the decade. NC is already home to fintech leaders including nCino and Live Oak Bank. Yet no high school pipeline exists to connect students — especially in low-income communities — to these careers. Healthcare has a pathway. Aviation and manufacturing have pathways. The digital economy does not. SB579 is the right vehicle to fix that.

THE ADVANTAGE

Jobs AI Regulates, Not Replaces

Every career in this pathway shares one characteristic: they require human judgment, ethical reasoning, and accountability — qualities that regulation demands and that AI cannot legally or practically substitute.

A compliance officer must sign off on risk. A UX researcher must interpret human behavior. A product manager must make tradeoffs between competing stakeholder needs. A data annotator teaches AI what is true. These roles govern AI — they are not governed by it.

CAREER TARGETS

Roles This Pathway Produces

GRC / RegTech Analyst	Digital Asset Compliance	AI Policy & Ethics
UX Researcher	Product Manager	Data Annotator
Solutions Architect	Smart Contract Auditor	Fintech Operations

WILMINGTON ADVANTAGE

Apprenticeship Partners, Already Here

New Hanover County is uniquely positioned to pilot this pathway. Anchor employers for apprenticeships and career exposure exist in our own backyard:

nCino	Live Oak Bank	GE Aerospace
Port of Wilmington	ILM Airport	Local Credit Unions
Regional Fintechs		

THE PATHWAY

Grade-Band Progression — Digital Economy & Responsible AI

Stage	Focus Area 1	Focus Area 2	Focus Area 3 & 4
Middle School Grades 6–8	Financial literacy foundations	How apps & platforms are built	Blockchain basics & crypto safety Intro to AI decisions & employer site visits
Early High School Grades 9–10	AI literacy & data ethics	Intro to compliance concepts	User research fundamentals Product thinking (no code)
Pathway Selection Grade 11	RegTech / GRC track	Product & UX track	Data & AI Governance track Dual enrollment & certifications
Capstone Year Grade 12	Paid apprenticeship or internship	CompTIA / Google UX / CAMS cert	Credential in SB579 digital wallet Direct hire or CC continuation

Four Specific Requests Under SB579

1. Name the Sector

Include digital assets, fintech, and responsible AI as named high-demand sectors under the Seamless Skills Initiative (Section 4), alongside healthcare and general high-tech.

2. Pilot in Wilmington

Designate New Hanover County as a pilot site. Local employer infrastructure — nCino, Live Oak Bank, GE Aerospace — enables immediate apprenticeship partnerships without building from scratch.

3. Start in Middle School

Activate the career exploration provision already in Section 1(e)(11) to include digital economy exposure for 6th–8th graders. The Board of Education's employer visit initiative is a ready vehicle.

4. Appoint Practitioners

Ensure the Commission and working groups include digital asset investors, RegTech practitioners, and community educators — not only academic or government representatives.

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In Support of SB579 | Transforming the High School Experience | NC General Assembly Session 2025